

PERSPECTIVES ON GURU ARJAN DEV CONTRIBUTION AND MARTYRDOM

Editor
DR NAVTEJ SINGH



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FOREWORD

With martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev there began a qualitative change both in the Sikh movement and history. It was bound to influence the socio-cultural and political developments in the Indian sub-continent. This single event proved potentially significant to the extent that its repercussions are equally visible in the contemporary socio-political environment.

Guru Arjan Dev's personality is unique in terms of his contributions to humanity, especially to the Sikhs, in the form of compilation of *Sri Adi Granth*. While there is no controversy on this latter aspect of Guru's personality; the circumstances and pressures leading to his sacrifice remain debatable among the scholars. The commemoration of the 400th year of Guru's martyrdom provided ample opportunity to the scholars and historians to re-visit this situation.

Consequently, Punjab Historical Studies Department organised a one-day seminar on 25 January 2007. Several eminent scholars participated in its deliberations and meaningful re-evaluation resulted in re-locating the issues involved in Guru's martyrdom. Availability of new source material and interpretations contributed much in this direction.

Publication of these research papers will add to our knowledge of Guru Arjan Dev and the issues related to His personality. Dr Navtej Singh, Head, Punjab Historical Studies Department, his colleagues and staff deserve congratulations for their hard work in bringing out this volume.

10 August 2007

SWARN SINGH BOPARAI

Kirti Chakra, Padma Shri Awardee
Vice-Chancellor
Punjabi University, Patiala

PRELUDE

As part of the on-going commemoration of the 400th year of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the Punjabi University, Patiala planned to organise discussions in various forms. As a result our department was asked to focus on this very significant event. The department contributed in three different ways : by bringing out a special issue of the journal *The Panjab Past and Present*-(October-2006) on 'Guru Arjan Dev in History' ; by holding one-day seminar (25 January, 2007) on 'Perspectives On Guru Arjan Dev: Contribution And Martyrdom', and by selecting theme of 39th session of the Punjab History Conference (16-18 March, 2007) as, 'Martyrdom And The Sikhs: Concept And Tradition.'

Obviously, 'martyrdom' of Guru Arjan Dev becomes predominant as for the evolution of the Sikh *Panth* is concerned. Though this is not to deny the significance of contribution of Guru Arjan Dev, which endures for ever. This concept of 'martyrdom' in Sikh movement and history remains debatable or matter of opinion from the very beginning. Dr Ganda Singh tried to place this issue in its proper historical setting in his article, 'The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan', published in 1988. Later on some Persian sources have been translated into English including '*Tujuk-e-Jahangiri*' and 'Letters of Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi'. Publication of the books '*Sikh History From Persian Sources*' by Professor Irfan Habib and Professor J.S. Grewal; and Mohsin Fani's '*Dabistan-e-Mujahib*' have further enriched our understanding to this concept. Louis E. Fenech's 'Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition' and Pashaura Singh's recent book on Guru Arjan have not only made use of the translated Persian sources but also attempted the entire issue of concept and philosophy of martyrdom. In that sense, these works constitute a new and different interpretation to the entire Sikh movement and history.

(viii) Perspectives On Guru Arjan Dev: Contribution And Martyrdom

Thus the very curiosity among the historical scholarship on this suggestive and pregnant theme makes it necessary to understand the age or time of Guru Arjan Dev— particularly the legacy of Guru Ram Das. Our two sub-topics are related to this issue. Contribution of Guru Arjan Dev including his writings, compilation of the Sikh scriptures, completion of Darbar Sahib along with some other urban centres are the topics of revisiting. Further-more, Guru's position in relation to broader Sikh movement, *Adi Granth*, its message and significance, the development of Sikh *panth* or crystalisation of the Sikh community and its various implications are included in the theme. Lastly, again the predominant abstraction of martyrdom, particularly information about martyrdom, sources and significance of martyrdom for Sikh polity, society and culture on one hand and for historiographical writings on Sikhism, on the other.

The seminar was presided over by eminent historian Professor J. S. Grewal, whose works are well-known because of his technique of examination and evaluation of sources alongwith the style of presentation and perception. The inauguration of deliberations of the seminar was initiated by S. Gurtej Singh, I.A.S. (Retd.) and Professor of Sikhism. Apart from his various other contributions, he has made addition by writing more than 10 books in Punjabi & English languages, on Sikh history & religion and the nature of Indian politics. Some of his well-known books include: *ਕਿਛੁ ਕਹੀਏ ਕਿਛੁ ਸੁਣੀਏ; ਸਿੰਘ-ਨਾਦ; ਪਰਚੀਆਂ ਸੇਵਾ ਦਾਸ; ਭਗਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਤੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਚੇਤਨਾ; Tandav of the Sintauro and Web of Indian Secularism.*

Response from the eminent scholars and historians was appreciably over-whelming. The mature and new interpretations of Professor S.S. Hans, Professor G.S. Dhillon, Professor Kirpal Singh, Professor Suba Singh, Professor G.S. Nayyar, Professor Rai Jasbir Singh, Professor M.S. Ahluwalia, Professor S.D. Gajrani, Dr Sarbjinder Singh, Dr Nazer Singh, Dr Sukhdial Singh and Dr K.S. Bajwa will certainly enrich our understanding of this momentous event in the history of mankind.

* Our worthy Vice-Chancellor, S. Swarn Singh Boparai, Kirti Chakra & Padama Shri Awardee, have been generous to promote academic activities of the department. He encouraged by sharing half of the financial responsibility for holding this seminar. The other half was

received from the Indian Council of Historical Research, New Delhi, who also shared some responsibility of publication of the seminar proceedings. Unhesitating co-operation was received from Dean, Academic Affairs, Professor S.S.Gill and the Registrar, Professor Parm Bakhshish Singh. My colleagues in the department and staff members equally shared the responsibility. S. Charanjit Singh spared no efforts in reading the proofs and his immense efforts deserve special thanks. I am indebted to all. My friends Dr Nazer Singh, Dr Bhiminder Singh and Dr Sumanpreet deserve special thanks for giving me moral support.

I am hopeful that publication of these explorations & re-interpretations of certain issues and events will not only sharpen our understanding, but will be the real humble homage to our great Guru—Arjan Dev.

Punjab Historical Studies Department,
Punjabi University, Patiala
25 January, 2008

NAVTEJ SINGH
Head

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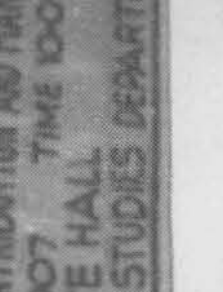
ਪੰਜਾਬੀ ਯੂਨੀਵਰਸਿਟੀ
ਪਟਿਆਲਾ



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ਪੰਜਾਬ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਅਧਿਐਨ ਵਿਭਾਗ
SEMINAR ON
DEREGISTRATION ON GURU ARJAN DEV: CONTRIBUTION AND MARTYRDOM
FRY 25, 2007 TIME 10:00 AM
HALL: SENATE HALL
HISTORICAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT



S. Gurtej Singh, I.A.S. (Retd.) addressing the audience
(facing page xii)

INAUGURAL ADDRESS

MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN DEV AND THE SIKH MOVEMENT: A BROADER PERSPECTIVE

S. Gurtej Singh, I.A.S. (Retd.) *

While there are many studies relating to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and all the aspects concerning the event have been much discussed, the larger perspective in which the Guru offered himself as a martyr remains, by and large, unexplored. May be because it is a politically inconvenient undertaking and therefore an anathema to scholars who would understandably maintain political neutrality. Ironically, it is this stance that has hindered the objective assessment of the Sikh revolutionary movement, has led to the inadequate appreciation of many historical events and has ultimately resulted in the distortion of Indian history. Among the very few immediately mentionable, inadequately interpreted events, are: the impact of the political concerns of Guru Nanak; the political status of the Tenth Guru; the contribution of Banda Singh Bahadur and of course the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and Tegh Bahadur. The essence of political neutrality perhaps lies in trying to discover the truth regardless of the consequences. In this age of the spread of information, it is hoped that our historians will not disappoint the eagerly waiting students of history. Placing the Guru's martyrdom in its proper historical perspective promises to afford new insights into Indian historical processes, and the origin and progress of the Sikh movement. It is a challenge worth responding to.

Guru Arjan was the Fifth Nanak. He was greatly inspired by the personality and work of Guru Nanak whom he remembered in terms of profound gratitude and unsurpassed adoration.¹ Proper beginning for an

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1. M.5, GG., p. 1387; Asa M.5, GG., p. 454.

undertaking of the type is to dwell on the relevant perceptions of Guru Nanak in some detail.

Guru Nanak felt concerned about human destiny in general. This led him to survey the contemporary world with great diligence and the precision of a deeply committed social scientist. His study-cum-missionary tours took him to all the centres of learning in India and the relevant foreign lands. He found it worthwhile to visit the major pilgrimage places sacred to Buddhists, Jains, Hindus, Jogis, Sufis, orthodox Muslims and others holding varied beliefs.² No religion was irrelevant to him and no sect was too insignificant to draw his attention. The exact extent of his journeys is not known but what is known is sufficient to convince an objective analyst that his concerns were world wide. He perhaps travelled more than all the prophets before him. Perhaps it was to indicate that he had come for the entire world and for no one particular race or culture. 'On close scrutiny, the Baba perceived the entire world to be in a deeply troubled states'.³ Equipped with insights into the functioning of the contemporary state and society, Guru Nanak contemplated on the unfolding scenario. In particular, he found the country he named 'Hindustan', in a deplorable state of abject slavery that paralysed and degraded the whole range of existence. No sphere of human activity was exempt from its evil effects. In his compositions (*bani* to be more precise), he touches upon the social, economic, political and spiritual aspects of slavery. He was much distressed with what he saw.⁴

His challenge was to forge a comprehensive response that would be in the nature of a cure for the ills of the entire humanity. The most urgent need was to totally transform and rejuvenate the society as he found it. A dynamic society shorn of the cumbersome burden of the past was required. Guru Nanak unveiled a clear vision of an eternally valid social order based upon his concept of a model human being, relevant to all ages, cultures and countries. To make the dream realisable, he rooted it in the expectations of the enlightened people and to the essence of the religious principles discovered by him.⁵ His task

2. *Babe dekhi pirthavi nau khand jithe tak ahi,*

Bhai Gurdas, *Var I*, Pauri 28

3. *Baba dekhe dhian dhar jalti sabh prithvi dis aiye,*

Bhai Gurdas, *Var I*, Pauri 24

4. *Haun bhaal vikunni hoie andhere rah na koiee -*

koor amavas sach chandrama disai nahee kaih charia

Majh M.1., GG., p. 145

5. Parbhati M.1., GG., pp. 1328-29.

was not easy and was certainly not achievable in one lifetime. The Guru's real genius lay in making long term arrangements for translating the vision into a concrete reality. The measures he devised were of universal applicability and included scriptural dimensions. He sought to progressively unfold his thesis in Hind.

New concepts had to be evolved. The grand edifice of his inspired society had high-minded individuals as its foundation. He proposed to create a new man, not seen in history since the reign of the great Buddha. It would be a deliberately chiselled human personality with the necessary ingredients grafted on to its nature to meet the stupendous task of total reconstruction. His ultimate model was God. He outlined the attributes of God as he conceived them. In His image he desired to mould all humans.⁶ His most significant attributes were, His love for His creation, His altruism, fearlessness and the absence of enmity (*nirbhau, nirvair*). Divine sanction was necessary to the grounding of his thesis and such a sanction was Nanak's starting point.⁷

The Guru evolved a universally applicable concept of freedom. He forged a totally fresh ethical system that would liberate humans and make them responsible in all the major concerns of mundane as well as spiritual existence. It was so different from the prevailing one that it was likened to making the river flow upstream and to turning the existing values up side down.⁸ The beginning was made by binding humans to the soil, to render them capable of realising the freedom he preached. He shunned renunciation and accepted the world as the true place to practise spirituality. Thus he made the assumption of social responsibility an integral part of spiritual development and the instrument of social reconstruction.

His very first significant step was the casting aside of the 'sacred thread'. That was to signal grant of freedom from all caste prejudices, superstitions, ritualism and cant. It was a prelude to eliminating the influence of the rapacious clergy ubiquitous in every religious order and the bane of every religion. His denunciation of the priestly class is the strongest. He held them responsible for total disruption of normal

6 . *Aanhat sunn ratte so kaisai, Jiste upjai tis hi jaisai.*

Ramkali, M.1., GG., p.943.

7 . Tilang M. 1, GG., p. 722; Wadhans M.1, GG., p. 566.

8 . Sorath M.3, GG. p. 602.

human existence and had no place for them in this system.⁹ Freedom from hunger was contemplated in order to give individuals the basic dignity required for complete personal transformation. For this he popularised new work ethics of productive labour and sharing the fruits thereof with others as the right conduct for a religious person.¹⁰ It was institutionalised in the form of '*langar*' even before he started on his *udasis* or preaching tours. Brotherhood of all humans flowed naturally from his position of an uncompromising monotheist.¹¹ It was the effect of this ideal that knit the society of his followers closely together, making them an effective instrument of social change.

For Guru Nanak's most significant political pronouncements, his four *Babarvani* verses¹² may be approached. He appears to suggest that there are no short cuts to the preservation of one's culture and society. He pointed out the futility of depending upon depraved rulers and a miracle performing superstitious clergy for the purpose. The 'thousands of holy men' who had claimed that they would render the invader's army blind by performing miracles, did not suffice to turn 'even a single Mughal blind'.¹³ Military measures were necessary to meet aggression. He denounced the 'bestly apathy' of the Lodhis who neglected the physical defence of the 'priceless heritage' (*rattan*) which they 'despoiled and cast away to dogs' (*vigaar vagoe kuttin*). With deep rooted dissatisfaction he observes that 'none will care for the Lodhis after death' (*moyian saar na kaiee*). Guru Nanak stood for non-aggression in international affairs. He strongly condemned the invader Babur. His army is for him the 'marriage party of sin', engaged in the despicable business of plunder and rape.¹⁴ He betrays his strongest emotions in these verses. He uses the words to convey it too. He says,

9. *Kaji koor bol mal khaai, bahman navai jean ghai, jogi surat na jaanai andh teeno ujare ka bandh.*

Dhanasri M.1., GG., p. 662;

Mathai tikka ter dhoti kakhai, Hath chhuri jagat kasai -

Asa M.1., GG., pp. 471-72; also Asa M.5, GG., p. 372.

10. *Ghal khai kichh hathon de, Nanak rah pachhanai se.* Sarang M.1., GG., p. 1245.

11. *Sabh mahai jot jot hai soe, Tisde chanan sabh mahai chanan hoe.*

Dhanasri M.1., GG., p. 13.

Sarab jot teri pasar rahi, jeh jeh dekhan teh teh narhari. Ramkali M.1, GG., p. 876.

12. Asa M.1. GG., pp. 360, 417 and Tilang M.1, GG., p. 722.

13. *Koie mughal na andhaa hoa kinhe na parcha laeoo.*

14. *Paap ki janj lai Kablon dhaiaa, jori mangai daan ve Lalo, Kajian bahmana ki gal thakki agad parhai shaitan ve Lalo.*

'I sing this song of bloody mayhem (*khooon ke sohle gavieh Nanak*) and pour out a handful of my own blood' with every note (*ratt ka kungoo paai ve Lalo*). He surpasses his own compassionate self while describing the plight of the Hindu and Muslim women at the hands of the invading barbarians. Here you have the rare sight of Nanak, the *pir* of Hind, drenched to the very depth of his soul in the noblest emotions ever expressed. He devotes a whole verse to that description.¹⁵

His most potent suggestion is that the people must rise to defend themselves. There is no honourable substitute to physical defence. It must never be a situation in which 'a lion falls upon a herd of cows'. If that happens, the religious instructions that the people have received must be questioned.¹⁶ Meeting an aggression effectively to preserve one's culture and dignity was the religious duty of each and every individual. Thus Guru Nanak laid the guiding principles for his followers and successor Gurus to implement. The most crucial of them is, 'life without honour is not worth living'.¹⁷ He prescribed remaining ever in readiness to avert a disaster. 'Punishment does not visit those who perceive early and make preparation to avert a disaster' (*agge de je cheteeai tan kayat mile sajai*).

Advance preparation for him is to acquire an attitude that culture and honour are worth defending at any cost. It involves sufficiently motivating individuals and setting up a permanent military organisation of ordinary citizens to resist tyranny of any kind. It is in the latter context that the Guru talks of the privilege of 'dying for a cause acceptable to God'.¹⁸ In the same context must be read his significant pronouncement that, 'those intensely desirous of playing the game of love must accept to die before venturing further God-wards'.¹⁹ In peace these volunteers must continue soldiering to promote brotherhood of man

15. Asa M.1, GG., p. 417.

16. *Eti maar payee kurlanai tain ki dard na aiya*, Asa M.1, GG., p. 360.
Biblical prescription on not resisting evil has been often examined, "Non-resistance in a world of men formed by natural selection and the struggle for existence, is an invitation to aggression and enslavement; a people that loved its enemies would be wiped off the face of the earth." Will Durant, *The Pleasures of Philosophy*, Simon & Schuater, New York, 1963, p. 363.

17. *Je jeevai pat lathi jai sabh haram jeta kuch khai*. M.1., GG., p. 142.

18. *Maran munsa sooria*, Wadhans, M.1. GG., p. 580.
Maran na manda loka akhiye. Wadhans, M.1., GG., p. 579.

19. Slok M.1., GG., p. 1412.

and to create conditions that would banish aggression. This was Nanak's complete programme for a permanent revolution in human affairs.

He sanctioned a chain of successors to implement it. They were all to be regarded as Nanak's own self so as to emphasise the continuity of the message. Significantly, he renamed his immediate successor, Lehna, as Angad and instructed him to use the name Nanak for himself. It is in this background of the long term unfolding of Nanak's mission and the laying down of the parameters for its progress that we must look for establishing the context of the Fifth Nanak's martyrdom.

Guru Arjan accepts Guru Nanak's concept of God being the only sovereign and the only entity deserving the exclusive allegiance of a God-oriented person.²⁰ He, likewise, recognised only One God as the 'sole king, the king of kings, whose order must prevail in every sphere.'²¹ God is the father and mother of all and cares for them as a loving mother cares for a child.²² He as Guru felt entitled to relay the announcement of this loving 'king of kings' that 'everybody should live happily and lead tension free lives, since the rule of the humble had begun.' The Merciful One had ordered that 'none should oppress another.'²³ This was the central message of his ministry. As a follower of Guru Nanak, he sought to translate it into reality.

As a person who relayed His *Hukam*, the Guru himself was a part of the compassionate sovereign. His position of a 'true king' as he came to be called in consequence, emanated also from his denunciation of the politics of untruth and the initiation of the politics of the whole truth based on the sovereignty of God. He disapproved the entire structure of the medieval state because, according to him, it was based on the pretension of power which was essentially illegitimate.²⁴ He had

20. Gauri M.5, GG., p. 258.

Sabh shahan sir saacha sahu.

- Ramkali M.5, GG., p. 893.

21. *Eko aap toohe vad raja. Hukam sache ke poore kaaja.*

Maru Sohle M.5, GG., p. 1074;

Saacha takhat sachi paatshahi. Sach khazana saacha sahee.

Maru Sohle M.5, GG., p. 1073.

22. Dakhne M.5, GG., p. 1101; Suhi M.5, GG., p. 783.

23. *Hun hukam hoa mehervaan da,*

pai koe na kissai rajannda.

sabh sukhalee vutthian eh hoa halemi raaj jio,

Sri Rag M.5, GG., p. 74,

24. *rajrang mayia visthaar*

asi hasti rath asvaari,

jhootha damp jhootha pasaari,

GG., p. 288.

no respect for those who exercised religious or political power in a manner that conflicted with God's benign Will.²⁵ Appealing directly to the heart of every reasonable person, he denigrated all man made inequalities and degradations based upon positions in an administrative hierarchy, ill-gotten wealth²⁶ or grounded in caste reckoning. To him all inequalities being false, artificial and illegitimate were unsustainable.²⁷ The effect of all this on the medieval mind brought up in the feudal system that brooked no deviation, was profoundly liberating.

The Guru provided a unique scripture to the new movement. He himself wrote more than half of it. It contained a comprehensive statement delineating his new politics. It emphasised human effort, discounted belief in miracles, prescribed freedom from political and spiritual slavery and superstition as preconditions to spiritual development. It sought to liberate man, rather than to provide for his oppression by binding him head to foot in scriptural irrationality and the world of make believe. The Guru's theology did not conflict with human rights; it gave solace to the oppressed and did not provide justification to the oppressor. It made the human comfortable in the warmth of God and did not provide for his soul burning eternally in His wrath.²⁸ It denied the existence of heaven and hell, belief in the evil existing independently of God and had no concept of original sin. His is a scripture which does not claim to exclusively know the ultimate truth and hence is not a source of intolerance and strife - of *Jehads* or of Crusades. It is in perfect harmony with the laws controlling the universe.²⁹ Much later, elsewhere, "the scriptures were constantly being quoted by those who wanted to exact obedience. From the scriptures were derived all dogmas, all superstitious beliefs and

25. *Patshahi chhattar sir sou, dooja avar na kou.*

Gauri Bawan Akhri, M.5.

26. *Papan baajhon hovai naahin moian sang na jaaiee*

Asa M.1., GG., p. 417.

Lakh adambar bahut visthara naam bina jhoothai pasara.

Gauri M.5, GG., p. 240.

27. *Haiver gaiver raaj rang, Tyag chhalio hai moorh nang.*

GG., p. 210.

28. 'Bloody Mary' the 16th century English queen, stated : 'As the souls of the heretics are hereafter to be eternally burning in hell, there can be nothing more proper for me than to imitate the Divine vengeance by burning them on earth'. *Critiques of God*, quoted by Paul N. Siegel in his, *The Meek and The Militant*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1986, p. 8.

29. 'This fool', said Luther of Copernicus, "wishes to reverse the entire science of astronomy; but sacred Scriptures tell us that Joshua commanded the sun to stand still, and not the earth." Paul N. Siegel, *Ibid*, p. 7.

practices - miracles that had never been. In as much as Nature followed uninterruptedly an immutable order. Any violation of that order would prove, not that God was mighty but that he did not exist."³⁰

Guru Arjan's finalised profile of a people who would implement God's will. It was a profile that he himself had helped to shape. His ideal is a completely free person, stubbornly refusing to belong to any sectarian set up. She/he is free also from artificial bonds that enslave one to the priestly order or the administration presided over by kings insisting on false claims to rule over others. Two centuries prior to the French Revolution, the Guru's ideal person is a completely liberated one. All that he prescribes for him is a broad, basic commitment to spirituality and does not expect him to sell his soul to any usurping human power construct or to a religious order. The Guru himself was also the new liberated, fearless man, charged with a task by Nanak, as he affirmed in his *bani*.³¹ He firmly rejects rituals and contemptuously dismisses the priestly classes in words, echoes of which can be heard in the writings of the later rationalist European philosophers.³² Guru Arjan's *Panth* was the collection of altruistic individuals who were firmly committed to upholding the Truth revealed by the Guru. Such was the finished product of the Sikh movement that surrounded him.

To such followers the Guru had recommended acquiring culture and enriching the self with righteous conduct.³³ Depiction of the futility of the pursuit of wealth, power and pleasure, forms a considerable part of his *bani*. 'The new light has revealed that Truth and the ability to do

30. Paul Hazard, *The European Mind 1680-1715*, Pelican Books, Middlesex, England, 1964, p. 168. Even in the age of Declaration of Rights of Man and the Bill of Human Rights included in the American Constitution, pious people, widely awake human right activists, convinced idealists like the high-minded George Washington continued to have slaves. European countries which held their scriptures in high regard continued to indulge in lucrative slave trade. High Church dignitaries continued to own slaves and even Napoleon, the 'child of the French Revolution', brought up in the liberal rationalist tradition which allowed him to mock at the Pope, had his slave Abdullah as his most trusted bodyguard.

31. *Footo aanda bharam ka manhe bhayia pargas,
kaati beri pagah te gur keeni band khalas.*

Maru M.5, GG., p. 1002.

32. Asa M.5, GG., p. 372;

Hirdai sach eh karni saar hor sabh pakhand pooj khawaar.

Parbhati M.1, GG., p. 1343.

33. *Nirdhan kau dhan tera nau, nithavain kau nau tera thau.*

M.5, GG., p. 266.

Jis simrat dukh sabh jai, naam rattan vassai man aai.

Suhi M.5, GG., p. 192.

Gurupdes jawahar manak sevai sikh so khoj lahai. Parbhati M.1, GG., pp.1328-29.

one's duty to man and God alone are liberating'.³⁴ The Guru's promise of converting animals and ghosts into gods and of setting stones afloat, stood fulfilled.³⁵

The external situation prevailing just before the time of Guru Arjan's martyrdom needs also to be recalled. The Sikh movement had come to acquire great potential. Adherents to the Guru's ideology had become numerous. Even in Guru Nanak's time, the following was large. At the time of Guru Amardas, his area of influence had to be divided into 22 sub-units coinciding with the 22 administrative provinces under Akbar. Guru Arjan was obliged to appoint deputies called *Masands* to carry out certain financial and religious functions on behalf of the Guru. During the time of Guru Hargobind, Mohsin Fani confirmed that his followers were to be found in most of the important cities of the subcontinent right up to Persia. Nanak had fired the imagination of the East. His message had kindled a hope in every heart. Both Jahangir and Shaikh Ahmed Sarhindi believed that many Muslims had started joining the Sikh movement. From the point of view of the state, the situation was becoming more and more alarming.

At no time during the Guru period, was there a paucity of Muslim adherents to the Guru's ideology. The key to understanding the phenomena perhaps is that the underlying universal current in the movement attracted the discerning people of India without consideration of religious affiliation. The process appears to have begun early. Guru Arjan opened avenues for cooperation with other faiths and sects like the *Sultanis* describable as Muslims, who formed a significant part of the population of the times. These people were not accepted as Hindus and presumably lived on the periphery of the Hindu villages. They were not formally converted Muslims but belonged to the *Sultani* half-way-house. There is sufficient evidence that great many followers of *Sakhi Sarvar* characterised as 'half-Muslims' ('*adh musulamme*') had formally converted and had joined the Guru's *panth* at various stages of the Sikh movement. During the Guru period they provided religious leaders like Hindal (Bhangu 252.6), Bhai Baihlo (Bhangu

34. M.5, GG., pp. 1386-87.

35. *Pasu pret pathar mugadh kau tarai, pahan paar utarai.* Bilawal M.5, GG., p. 802;
Gauri M.5, GG., p. 274;
Satgur paiaa pooran haavan pasu preto dev karai. Parbhati M.1, GG., p. 1329.

567) and Lakhmir (Bhangu 107). One of the most powerful political leader Shyam Singh of the *Karorsinghia misl* came from amongst them (Bhangu 538). The Grewals around Ludhiana, perhaps like other Jats in the Punjab, were also followers of *Sakhi Sarvar* at the beginning of the eighteenth century. The *Sultanis* continued to join the Sikhs in ever increasing numbers. Bhangu reports that they joined out of genuine conviction.³⁶ Even Banda Bahadur had a Muslim contingent of about five thousand in his army. In a manner of speaking, Jahangir was right. The Guru had encroached upon the fertile recruiting grounds of Islam.

It appears that the people had become organised well enough to collectively assert themselves in favour of the Guru and his ideology as is borne out by events happening at the beginning of the next Guru's spiritual reign. The Guru had no difficulty in raising a force of 2200 mounted soldiers as ordered by his father immediately before his martyrdom. They offered impressive non-violent resistance to ensure the release of Guru Hargobind from Gwalior and still later, they determinedly confronted the armed might of the Mughal empire. They fought three major pitched battles with the Mughals. In all these battles the Mughals could not achieve their object. Obviously during Guru

36. Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Panth Parkash*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1984, p. 84, couplet 50; *Census of India*, [Vol. XIX (Part I), Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, Calcutta, India, 1892, p. 137] report for 1891, has a very telling paragraph in this regard. It is being quoted here extensively. The followers of Sarwar, "eat animals whose throat has been cut in orthodox Musalman manner. This accounts for the fact that comparatively few Sikhs are followers of Sarwar and there is in fact a sort of opposition in the central districts between Sikhs and Sultanis - worship of Sarwar probably spread eastwards among the Jats in the fifteenth and sixteenth century, and was the prevalent cult at the time of the great development of Sikhism in the days of Guru Gobind Singh; and that most of the converts to the *Khalsa* faith were from the worshippers of Sultan. This appears a very probable account of the origin of such opposition as does exist between the two forms of faith. As between the Hindus generally and Sultanis there is no sort of opposition - Sarwar himself was a Musalman and never pretended to be anything else - His priests, *Bharais*, are Musalmans almost to a man' The noticeable paradox is that the Hindus remained staunch supporters of the Mughal regime. From those who presented the *mahzar* against Guru Arjan (*mahzar jhootha keeton aap*- Gauri M.5, GG., p.199) to Chandushah, the Hill Rajas who fought against Guru Gobind Singh to *Khattris* of the Punjab who financed the campaign against Banda Bahadur to Rajputs and Jats who took the field against him, (see Muzaffar Alam, *The Crisis of Empire in Mughal North India*, Oxford University Press, Bombay, 1993) the Hindu opposition to the Sikh movement was consistent and perhaps suicidal in the sense that it much delayed political change. The thesis that the Sikhs are descendants of Hindu converts may be politically convenient but historically it is very difficult to support in the circumstances.

Arjan's time the Sikh movement had become a potential threat, like no other, to the Mughal state.

The political temper of his people slowly became compatible with the nature of the Truth that the Guru preached and the universal concerns he held so dear. He had successfully converted his followers into potent instrument of transformation of society. In response to the Guru's new politics, the humblest follower of the Guru had completely transformed himself. A grass cutter wanting to see the True King strayed into Jahangir's tent. He offered his mite and bowed reverently touching the ground with his forehead. The moment he realised his mistake he promptly picked up the small coin and turned rudely away.³⁷ Nothing like this had happened in a millennium. The new man was a reality. He was completely fearless, totally God-oriented and fully receptive of His *hukam*.³⁸ Surely the import of this most fascinating engineering feat in Indian history was not lost on the administration of the times. Since response to the Gurus' ideology was widespread, it potentially left the king progressively with lesser and lesser number of partisans to preserve his stranglehold over others.

The major contributions of the Guru's ministry must be briefly recalled at this stage. He encouraged his followers to seriously take up horse trade. This involved their acquiring riding skills and getting familiar with the care and use of horses. His followers in his immediate circle, people like the scholar Bhai Gurdas were also involved in the exercise. His last instructions to his successor were to sit fully armed on the throne and to maintain a regular cavalry.³⁹ It is obvious that the

37. See, Santokh Singh, *Shri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1963, p. 2466.

38. Asa M.5, *GG.*, p. 391.

39. Guru Nanak conducted the earliest battle review of India's battles against Babur. Like the modern historians he also came to the conclusion, that Babur had the advantage of the gun powder and of cavalry. His opponents lost because they used elephants. The same is true of India's battle against Alexander in 326 BCE. Alexander threw Porus' men "into confusion with storm of arrows and charges of their horse". (John W. McCrindle, *The Invasion of India by Alexander The Great*, Westminster : A Constable, 1896, p. 104). At the Battle of Tallikota in January 1565 CE where the Hindu confederacy lost a crucial battle to the Mughal power, the Commander in Chief of Vijayanagar force, Rama Raya, like Porus, commanded the army from atop an unusually large elephant. Being so conspicuous, he was attacked vigorously and was killed because the wounded animal panicked. Significantly, this happened during the life time of Guru Arjan. J.N. Sarkar understands that the defeat

ground to recruit the force had been already prepared. He expanded Amritsar and erected it into an autonomous city conducive to congregating freely and discussing without hindrance. He built the *Harmandir* at Amritsar as the spiritual headquarters of Nanak's permanent revolution. He compiled the scripture to preside in the sanctum sanctorum as the future *Guru Granth*, the eternal guide. It gave the formidable scriptural sanction to Nanak's mission and placed it on secure ideological footing. Arrangements for the continued guidance of his followers were thus firmly put into place. The Guru had his own 'tithe collectors' or *Masands*. Finances were available for a worthy cause. This is the situation to which later historians would apply the epithet of a 'state within a state'.

In consequence, the political status of Guru Arjan had grown so much that Akbar paid him a visit and Khusrau sought his help to rise to kingship. The Guru was hailed as the True King, and was deemed, entitled to ceremonials befitting a king.⁴⁰ His responsibility to move on to the next stage on the path of liberation left nothing wanting. He was not only a Guru, but he was also a Sikh - a kind of Prometheus unbound, a Bodhisattva possessing infinite compassion, the basic structure of whose mind the Sikh movement had carefully, lovingly crafted. He had what he needed to formally unfold the next stage of the revolution that would ruffle many a feather. From his *bani* it appears that the Guru had done enough waiting. More waiting was not favoured.⁴¹ The Guru appears to be seized of a sense of urgency and makes repeated assertions like 'there is no turning back - deal with it this time, there will not be another birth.'⁴² It appears that the Guru was

(Cont...)

resulted from "their leaders riding on elephants instead of swift horses." (*Military History of India*, Calcutta, 1960, p. 15). A cure for this malady of the Indian resistance movement was crucial to its success. It was the cavalry that eventually ensured the success of the *Khalsa*.

40. *Chhattar singhasan pirthami gur Arjan kau de aieo*. GG., p. 1409.

41. Incidentally, after the Battle of Tallikota, that had been lost during his lifetime (January 1565), India was a fully conquered land. It was now without the possibility of organised resistance for a long long time. It lay prostrate before a chain of unsympathetic autocratic and oppressive rulers supporting an inimical culture. Her humiliation was complete. The situation mocked God, Justice, Truth and the Guru's *panth* in the face.

42. *Agah ku tragh pichhaha fern a mohdara, sijh evaha vaar bahur na hovjee janamara*.

Dakhne M.5., GG., p.1396; Sri Rag M.5, GG., pp. 50,22 and M.5, GG., p.12.

preparing to ignore the existing administration altogether. He was just a step away to setting up his own informal judicial system and to recruiting people's defence force.

The Mughal state prevented that disaster from happening. So his most significant contribution became the formal launching of the next phase of the contemplated revolution with his own martyrdom. As a Sikh, the Guru had obtained heightened consciousness by following the prescribed religious discipline. He had been able to efface his ego and had substituted it with God's Will - the source of altruism. By offering himself as a martyr, he tried to violently shake the larger society out of the psychological mould into which individuals composing it, had been beaten by oppressors of a thousand years. In the last act he emphasised the value system that he and his predecessors had inculcated for renewal and resurgence. He wanted to encourage everyone to take another birth in the Guru's house, that is, into a totally new value system. He wanted to provide a tool to ordinary individuals, powerless, disarmed, demoralised and enslaved to tackle the tyrannical system and individual tyrants. The Sikh movement after him bears out that the Guru was eminently successful in his mission and had also provided a model that could be worked by anyone anywhere. In his martyrdom he paved the royal road to human liberation and therefore to mundane social change and spiritual progress. Those who took to the path shown by him were never tired of proclaiming, 'I am a sacrifice unto Guru Arjan.'⁴³

The Guru's martyrdom was a grand launching of the next phase, namely, that of ignoring the existing administration and of erasing it from the people's minds to begin with and of eventually pushing it out of existence. The Guru's final pronouncement on the subject was openly spelt out. His specific *shabad* defining the duties of a God-oriented person must have come as nothing less than a declaration of war to certain years. It is in part biographical. In this he traces his own spiritual development until he became one with God, who to him 'is sweeter than mother and father'. He aptly likens the change 'to the rehabilitation of a deserted place'. As a Guru, he believes, he has provided for the amelioration of the world by encouraging the use of 'Nanak's boat of Truth'. About himself he further affirms, 'I am God's

43. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1952, Var 24, Pauri 23.

champion. On forming an alliance with the Guru, I stand proud and elevated with a crown of a raised turban over me. I have discovered the opportunity I was seeking. The field is laid out. God himself has come to witness the tournament. I will acquit myself such that I may never dance in this contest again.'⁴⁴ The whole establishment understood the import of that declaration. The contest was between a moral colossus with a mandate to change the world unrecognisably and an usurper king, backed by the armed might of the state seeking to preserve the status quo. The empire was too small for two kings, one claiming allegiance over the minds of men and the other over their bodies. Each knew who would be victorious in the end. The true emperor's passionate striving was bearing fruit. The 'false one' was impatient and commanded an army. He placed his adversary in the hands of Chandu, the most vengeful, most cruel and the most arrogant of all executioners. This is how the 'crown of martyrs' began his new reign as a martyr.

The Guru's martyrdom was the watershed of the final phase. The Gurus and their Sikhs had few moments of respite after this. All of them were prosecuted by the state. Rival Gurus were created. All the Gurus coming after Guru Arjan died young and several died unnatural deaths, one was martyred likewise. All of them lived up to their resolve of 'never being seen by the king and of never seeing the king' again, except on terms of equality. Elaborate protocol laying down minute details seems to have been agreed upon when the Tenth Guru met Bahadur Shah.⁴⁵ This interlude did not last long and then the battle to the finish ensued which ended in the gradual phasing out of the Mughal empire and its replacement with '*sarkar khalsa jio*' or the people's government led by the *Khalsa* (to use Sirdar Kapur Singh's translation of the phrase).

Now, an analysis of the Gurus' contribution to reconstruction of the human material and society has been briefly attempted, a few

44. Sri Rag M.5, *GG.*, pp.73-74.

45. An elaborate protocol to receive the Guru was noticed by Bhangu. Bhangu, *op. cit.* pp. 238-39. He came fully armed to the court, was received midway to the throne by the emperor himself muttering soothing greetings of welcome. Was respectfully seated and patiently heard. He was given costly presents on departure. (William Irwine, *Later Mughals*, Oriental Book Reprint Corporation, New Delhi, 1971, p. 90). One of the presents was the sword of Ali the son-in-law of the prophet Muhammad. It had been confiscated in the Battle of Badar. It was spoken of as "the costliest jewel in the treasury of the imperial Mughals by the presenter. See, Kapur Singh, "An Islamic Sacred Heirloom at Kesgarh Takhat," *The Sikh Review*.

questions that confront the inquisitive mind may be posed. Perhaps there is no better forum than this to raise them. Whenever these questions are probed they will be probed by distinguished historians like you: 'everyone else has succumbed to the bewitching charm of the godless seductress, now the prophet alone remains to side with Gcd'.

Nanak's position is known. The questions are : (1) Who else felt so deeply concerned about the moral degradation resulting in political slavery that seemed never ending? (2) Who else made elaborate plans, spanning centuries, for ridding Hind of these demeaning disabilities? (3) Heads of which other orders stood with the deprived people to the extent of sacrificing themselves and their families in a bid to seek their amelioration? (4) Who else of those who intervened, was not exploiting the situation for gains, but was in the 'game of love', solely for the sake of liberty and the spiritual well being of the masses? (5) Which other order fought myriad battles for making the individual sovereign (*hanne hanne mir*— a king in every pommel) and the society an autonomous self-governing entity? (6) For four centuries it was Nanak and his progeny who were the symbols and guiding lamps of human self respect, collective honour and social glorification. Yet what position does Nanak have today in the life of the nation that benefited from his work? Does it appear that he has lost out to known hypocrites and collaborators of foreign colonisers?

Ajab tamasha ditham sajjan hik dehon tain darbare.

Ibn-ul-waqat muazziz theendai jaan nissar khuarai.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

*Prof. J.S. Grewal**

It is a pleasure to thank Professor Gurtej Singh for his Inaugural Address. He has made a very serious presentation. Referring to the general characteristics of the Sikh movement, he has dwelt on how Guru Arjan represented the movement and carried it forward so that it became a threat to the existing political order. And this basically would explain the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. Secondly, the movement as it took shape later can be seen as deeply influenced by the fact of Guru Arjan's martyrdom.

I have known Professor Gurtej Singh for a long time. He was a student of History at the Panjab University, Chandigarh, when I was teaching there and he started his research with me as his guide. I am not sure whether or not he learnt anything from me but I did learn quite a few things from him even as a researcher. Subsequently, I have been reading whatever he has written, because I look upon him as an earnest scholar. I may or may not agree with him but I take his views seriously.

The subject of the seminar is going to be discussed by a number of scholars present here. I have myself written something on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and his *Bani*, but I would not like to repeat anything I have written. I would like to emphasize that there is always the possibility of looking at the same evidence from different angles and perspectives. And this should be welcome. Looking at the same phenomenon from different perspectives, and looking at the same evidence from different angles, leads to a better understanding of the subject. A number of seminars have been held this year on Guru Arjan and his martyrdom, and also on his contribution to the Sikh movement and to the history of the country. It may not be easily possible to make

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substantially new addition to the 'received wisdom'. But I feel very happy that the inaugural address by Professor Gurtej Singh would certainly oblige us to rethink about the nature and character of the Sikh movement in relation to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and the legacy this event left for the later history of the Sikhs.

There would be other speakers discussing the same theme or dilating upon the other aspects of Guru Arjan's carrier, his achievement, his activity and the kind of legacy he left for the succeeding generations. If we look at the time of Guru Arjan and what he did in the context of the Sikh movement, we do get this impression that the Sikh movement was coming towards a kind of culmination. I had the opportunity once to address a group of designers working on the Khalsa heritage for the Anandpur Sahib Foundation. They were not really students of Sikh history and I thought of discussing the Sikh movement with them in a simple way. I suggested that the Sikh movement can be understood in terms of three Gs: the Guru, the Granth, and the Gurdwara. We are familiar with the institution of Guruship in the Sikh tradition. For the Gurdwara there may be some doubt, but simply because the institution was known as *dharmsal*, starting with the *dharmsal* established by Guru Nanak at Kartarpur. It was essentially a Gurdwara where the Sikhs met for congregational worship and community meal. Similarly, the beginnings of the *Granth* can be traced to Guru Nanak using his own *bani*, for the purpose of worship. His successors composed, recorded and collected *bani* and eventually the *Granth* was compiled by Guru Arjan. Thus, we can see the development of the Sikh *Panth* during the sixteenth century in terms of the three Gs. There is absolutely no doubt that by the end of the sixteenth century in northern India there was no other leader who was really so important and so powerful in terms of his influence as Guru Arjan. Whether or not we accept the kind of detail which is presented by Professor Gurtej Singh in his inaugural address, he has certainly presented a proposition that must be seriously considered. I hope there would be responses to this proposition during the course of the seminar.

I feel happy to be associated with this seminar. It reminds of a situation in which the Cambridge University Press invited my supervisor to write a volume for the *New Cambridge History of India* and I too received an invitation from them to write a volume on the

Sikhs. My supervisor, Dr Peter Hardy, wrote to me that he was extremely happy to see a student of his writing a volume for the series for which he was invited to write another. To preside over the inaugural address of my former student, Professor Gurtej Singh, is a special pleasure.

I have no doubt that the proceedings of the seminar would be extremely useful and my best wishes are with its organizers and the scholars who are going to participate in it.

SIKHISM BEFORE GURU ARJAN DEV : HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

Dr Sukhdial Singh *

Guru Arjan Dev was the fifth Guru of the Sikhs. He ascended the Guruship in 1581 A.D. Before him, the four Gurus : Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das preached and spread the Sikh religion. Resultantly, the Sikh society was well-established and well-organised to which he was destined to lead. This was the long process of one hundred and twelve years (1469-1581 A.D.). During this period, the rise of Sikh religion represented the spirit of renaissance. The message of this renaissance expressed concern for matters temporal as well. The combination of the spiritual and the temporal in a doctrine of Sikhism was hitherto unknown to the masses of the Indian sub-continent.

The Sikh Gurus left deep impact on the Indian society. They provided vital leadership to the down-trodden and suppressed people. Their contribution in every field of society was striking and remarkable. They placed simple but high ideals before the people at a time when superstitions, fanaticism and despair reigned supreme everywhere. They removed false beliefs and fears from the minds of men and women and held out before them the prospects of hope, confidence, peace and salvation.

Punjab's political and geographical entity through the ages has been elusively inconsistent. This itself is the sign of the changes and upheavals this region has seen the violent vicissitudes it has passed through. Yet there is something permanent, something distinctively characteristic about the Punjabi spirit which has survived to challenges and turmoil of time. The Punjab's colourful and eventful history has given its people their peculiar qualities. The uncertainty and hardship of

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precarious times have endowed them with the toughness of character, courage and resilience. Equally noticeable are their ardent devotion to freedom and an emancipated outlook, adaptability and tolerance.

It was on account of such traits that the region witnessed many religious movements, such as Sufism and Sikhism. These movements struck its roots deep into the fertile soil of the 'land of the five rivers'. The advocates of these movements preached here and tried to create spirit of common brotherhood of man. They proclaimed their belief in one God and in the unity of humanity. The people of Punjab, thus, were shaken from time to time, out of the shackles of caste barriers which tend to cramp the spirit and undermine the health of a society. That is why, the Punjabis did not accept the Vedic or Brahmanical culture as propounded by its priests. For centuries, they stood against its dogmas.

The Sikhism was founded by Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.). Guru Nanak began his work in the early years of sixteenth century. During the third decade of this century Babur invaded the country and thus, the country was riddled with conflict and chaos and experienced political upheavals of the worst kind. The age of political unity appeared to be irretrievably lost. It was Guru Nanak who vehemently protested against it and uttered his views aloud to the people. He lived and moved amongst the people. His heart bled on seeing the miserable condition of his country. Nothing could be more vivid than his own comment in the *Maajh Raag* of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

The dark-age is the scalpel, the kings are the butchers,
and righteousness has taken wings and flown.

In this no-moon night of falsehood, the moon of truth
is not seen to rise anywhere.

In my search, I have become bewildered.

In darkness I find no path.

By taking pride, Mortal bewails in pain.

Says Nanak, by what means, can the mortal be delivered.¹

The advent of Guru Nanak was the signal of a new awakening. He found his new establishment. He created a *gurmukh* (the God-oriented man) who was to fight against that falsehood and injustice. The group of these *gurmukhs* was named *sangat* (congregation). The groups of

1. Manmohan Singh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (Eng. Trans.), S.G.P.C., Amritsar, 1987, p. 483.

these *Sangats* was a society established by Guru Nanak. It was based on the doctrine of the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Thus, he brought before the people the vision of a classless and casteless society in which the high and the low, the rich and the poor could move freely and claim equal status.

He preached his mission in the language of the masses. It was Punjabi. He produced his literature in this very language, Guru Nanak knew his helpless and emasculated countrymen as well as their potentialities which lay dormant in the deep recesses of their bleeding hearts. They had only to be relumed with the promethean fire and this he undertook to do. He faced Babur and challenged him in the open fields of Saidpur (Emnabad). Thus, after the centuries of subjection, Guru Nanak was the first man among the Indians to raise his voice against the tyranny and oppression. In the words of G.C. Narang, "It leavened the whole Hindu thought in the Punjab and improved the moral and spiritual tone of the whole people. Here was now, for the first time after ages of dispersion and discard, a hero, whom every Hindu could call his own and of whom every Hindu could feel justly proud. The appearance of Nanak was a great step towards arousing consciousness of a common nationality."²

Before Guru Nanak breathed his last in 1539 A.D. he nominated his successor and commissioned him to carry on the work he had started. The nomination of Angad Dev to the Guruship was, in the words of Indu Bhusan Banerjee, "a fact of the profoundest significance."³ Trumpp also confirms this view when he writes, "The disciples of Nanak would no doubt have been dispersed and gradually disappeared as well as the disciples of many other Gurus before Nanak, if he had not taken care to appoint a successor before his death."⁴

The transformation of Lehna into Angad showed how, on the path of Sikhism, a dedicated novice becomes an inspired disciple and the disciple changes mentally and spiritually into an embodiment of his Master's spirit. Rai Balwand and Satta *Doom*, the contemporary of Guru Angad Dev, depicted the succession of Guru Angad in very

2. G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, Lahore, 1911, p. 26.

3. Indu Bhusan Banerjee, *Evolution of the Khalsa* (Vol. I), Calcutta, 1972, p.146.

4. Trumpp, *The Adi Granth, or The Holy Scripture of the Sikhs*, London, 1877, p. LXVII (introduction).

beautiful words. According to them, "Nanak placed the Royal crown over Angad's head and hymning Lord's praise, he quaffed nectar. Guru Nanak placed the soul-illuminating, supremely powerful sword of his instruction in Lehna's mind. During his very life time, Guru Nanak made obeisance unto Angad, his disciple. Guru Nanak, the King, whilst alive gave the apostolic mark to Angad. As the reward of his service, Nanak got announced the proclamation of Lehna's accession. The same is the Divine Light and same the life department. The King Nanak has again merely changed his body. The beauteous Divine umbrella waves over him (Angad) and he has occupied Guru Nanak's shop and sits on his throne."⁵

According to the instructions of the first great Guru, Guru Angad Dev shifted to Khadur Sahib and established there his new headquarter immediately after taking the responsibility of Guruship but not without some problems. The first major problem which he faced was, Baba Sri Chand's hostile attitude. He was the elder son of the first great Guru, but was ignored by the great Guru himself because he was not in the discipline of Sikhism. He was an ascetic and did not believe in household's life.

Guru Angad faced this problem courageously and therefore, took prompt steps and made it clear in unequivocal terms to his disciples that Guru Nanak's doctrine was essentially a religion of householders. It was also declared that the followers of Baba Sri Chand (who were called the *Udasis*) even if they held faith in most of Guru Nanak's tenets, were not true Sikhs. By doing so, Guru Angad barred the door to asceticism and made the influences of Guru Nanak available not only for religious uplift but also for social regeneration. Thus, the *Udasi* doctrine of Baba Sri Chand could not become a mass movement much less part of the Sikh movement. By preaching vigorously the essentials of Sikhism, coupled with certain other steps, the Guru tried to create distinct consciousness which went a long way in preserving Sikhism from merging into Hinduism and his disciples from being absorbed into the Hindu masses.

Guru Angad compiled the composition of Guru Nanak and wrote his own *Bani* also. His own verses are sixty-three. It can be well

5. *Guru Granth Sahib, Ramkali Ki War*, p. 966. For Eng. Trans. see Manmohan Singh, *op. cit.*, pp. 3172-73.

imagined from his own words that he had a thorough grasp of the philosophy of Guru Nanak. To preserve these compositions for posterity he invented a new script called *Gurmukhi*.⁶ For the first time in the history of Punjabi language it got its own script in the letters of *Gurmukhi*. The significance of the adoption of a new script and of extensive use of Punjabi, lies in this that the Guru rejected the foreign Persian language and emphasized that unless the people adopted script which was their own and which suited their language, their culture could not be grown. Moreover, it gave a severe blow to the Brahmans who, through their monopoly of the knowledge of Sanskrit, had given currency to the belief that their superiority or prestige was ordained by God. Since the anthology was in people's mother tongue, it gained enormous popularity among the masses who neither understand Persian nor Sanskrit. Thus, this step had far-reaching results. Guru Angad's compilation of the *Gurbani* became the nucleus of the sacred writings of the Sikhs. It provided them their own language and script and also fostered a sense of their being a separate people.⁷

Guru Angad also got prepared the *Janam Sakhi* (Biographical account) of Guru Nanak by Bhai Bala, Guru Nanak's own companion. Though this *Janam Sakhi* was corrupted later on by the Hindalyas yet it owes its origin with Guru Angad Dev. These two achievements of the Guru provided a focal point of piety and doctrine for the Sikh *sangats*. Moreover, it gave definite direction to the faith of the Sikhs, besides providing a living proof of the Sikh doctrine but there was no essential difference between the Guru and his word.

Guru Angad Dev established the institution of *Guru Ka Langar*, at Khadur Sahib where the Sikh *sangats* of the different areas used to meet for congregational purpose. His wife, Mata Khivi, took special interest in the *Langar* and it was common to serve sweet-pudding of rice boiled in milk (*Kheer*). The Guru appointed a store-keeper and a master-cook to look after the needs of the Sikh *sangats*.

The new city of Goindwal was established to give a sense of unity and an independent identity to the Sikhs. In the city of Goindwal no

6. See also Sarup Das Bhalla, *Mehma Parkash* (Kavita), Patiala, 1971, p. 10; Pandit Shardha Ram Phillauri, *Sikhan De Raj Di Vithya*, Presbyterian Mission, Ludhiana, 1868, p. 20; and Gian Singh, *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, Sialkot, 1891, p. 175.

7. See also Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs: 1469-1839*, Vol. I, Oxford, 2004, p. 53.

separate ward was marked for low castes or for any particular community. Anybody could build his house anywhere. Attempts were made here in a calculated manner that Sikh values should be imbibed by the people. That is why there still persist memories that in the Sikh cities no one could die of hunger, because in addition to *Guru Ka Langar*, kitchen in each house is kept open for needy persons. The city of Goindwal played indeed a lot to shape the Sikh psyche and to propagate the Sikh ideology.

After doing his best to consolidate Sikhism for nearly twelve years, Guru Angad Dev breathed his last on *Chet sudi 4, Samvat 1609* which corresponds to 29 March, 1552 A.D. He appointed Amar Das, in his life time, as third successor of Guru Nanak's house.

Guru Amar Das was seventy- three years old when he ascended the institution of Guruship. He held his ministry for twenty-two years until he expired in 1574. From 1540 to 1552 he had been in the company of Guru Angad Dev and had drunk deep at the fount of inspiration. He had also imbibed fully the Sikh ethos and judged for himself how useful was Sikhism to bring about regeneration. Besides this, he must have gauged the extent of dangers threatening its existence and also the urgency of the need to develop further the organization of Sikhism.

Guru Amar Das's first work was to get a *baoli* dug at Goindwal so that the needs of drinking water could be fulfilled. This *baoli* was a well with stairs leading down to the surface of the water. There were two kinds of wells. The one was with the Persian wheels and the second was with long stairs. The people could draw water from this *baoli* by going downward. This was a first well of its kind in the area of Punjab. So people were attracted to see this *baoli*. Thus, the *baoli*, had deep effect on the psychology of the people. The Sikhs started visiting the place in a large number and this project afforded an opportunity to the Guru to come into close contact with the Sikhs. Out of these close contacts sprang the devotion for the Guru which proved to be a strong bond to bind them to Sikhism. Guru Amar Das also chose the site of modern Amritsar for a new religious centre where the construction work was started by the Guru himself under the supervision of Bhai Jetha.⁸

8. Giani Gian Singh, *Twarikh Sri Amritsar* (1923), reprinted by Kendri Sri Guru Singh Sabha, Chandigarh, 1999.

The institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* received still greater strength at the hands of Guru Amar Das. The Guru had issued a fiat : "First eat together and then meet together" (*Pehle Pangat Peechhe Sangat*). The fiat was implemented rigidly. When Akbar paid a visit to Guru Amar Das at Goindwal, he could not see the Guru without taking food in *Guru Ka Langar*. This institution was made a means of emphasizing the unity and equality of mankind. The Guru demanded through this common meal that all who came to him, Hindu, Muslim, Brahmin or untouchable, emperor or beggar, should lay aside their prejudices. The *Langar*, in fact, was emphasized as a device for expressing the theoretical notion of equality in the practical way.

Besides this, the Guru preached vigorously what he stood for. He wrote a larger number of hymns and exhorted his followers to recite them and told them that whosoever imbibed their essence would acquire godly qualities. In quite a number of verses, he emphasized that the Guru's *Shabad* was superior to everything else and the Sikhs were advised to use only the Guru's *Shabad* in worship.

Guru Amar Das maintained the tradition of Guru Nanak's social reforms. He condemned the caste system, untouchability and the customs of *Sati* and *Purdah*. All these prevalent Hindu social customs were dehumanizing and at best catered to the interests of only a particular class. He advocated equality in terms of sex, creed and caste on the basis of universal brotherhood of man. He encouraged inter-caste marriage and widow re-marriage.

The birth and death rites of the Hindus were abandoned. These were too many and too costly but the worst thing was that these were against the Sikh concept of death and violated the very spirit of Sikhism. The Guru advised his followers to give up these rites and in their place prescribed a simple ceremony which mostly consisted of singing holy hymns from *Gurbani*.⁹

The upshot of all the measures was that Sikhism began to emerge as a distinctive entity. As was expected, the orthodox sections in the Hindu society did not take kindly to the teachings of Guru Amar Das. They complained to the Emperor more than once against his unorthodox ways. At one time they even led a deputation and submitted

9. *Guru Granth Sahib, Ramkali Sadd*, pp. 923-24.

a lengthy memorandum to the Emperor levelling a series of charges against him. The Guru had to depute his most trusted follower Bhai Jetha to the Emperor's court to answer the charges. Bhai Jetha explained everything to the Emperor very intelligently. Resultantly, the Emperor was very much convinced by Jetha's conduct and the complaint was ultimately dismissed. A few years later, the Emperor personally waited upon the Guru at Goindwal and even ate in his *Langar*. The tradition goes that he also offered a land grant in the name of the Guru's daughter Bibi Bhani before his departure from there but the Guru politely refused to accept the grant. All this gave a boost to the Sikh people and for the rest of the reign of Akbar all adversaries of the Sikhs were silenced.

The liberalism of Akbar's religious policy helped Sikhism to spread in yet another way. Muslim orthodoxy was in low spirits during the period because Akbar had withdrawn his patronage from it. It has retaliated by trying to harm the Emperor once or twice but each time had met with utter failure. The result was that Sikhism under Guru Amar Das, and in fact for many years long after, experienced no difficulty from the Muslim orthodoxy. However, some trouble was, no doubt, created by a few Shaikh families settled at Goindwal. At their instigation, a group of notorious boys caused some harassment to the Sikhs wanting to fetch water from the river Beas for the Guru's *Langar*. But it was only a localized affair and the conflict seems to have arisen not from any religious cause but was probably the outcome of some local quarrel of a mundane nature.

The growing number of the Sikhs needed sustained guidance, coordination and some sort of system. To this purpose the institution of *Manjis* was established. The word '*Manji*' literally signifies cot or *chorpoy*— a common Indian bedstead. But here it denotes a responsible religious position conferred by the Guru upon a prominent devotee of his, or a seat of delegated authority. The Guru appointed 22 *Manjidars* (missionaries) to carry on the work of preaching the Sikh doctrine and to keep the local bodies in touch with the Guru.

Only men of recognized piety and sterling integrity were awarded the distinction of *Manji*. It was also an essential qualification that they correctly understood and preached the teachings of the Sikh Gurus. They conducted their missionary work individually and also through

congregations (*Sangats*). But they did not always confine themselves to their native places. On the contrary, whenever possible and convenient, they moved about in the countryside carrying the torch of the Guru's message. They maintained their connection with the Guru at the centre by means of periodical visits, more often on the annual *Baisakhi* fair when it was started at Goindwal. Some of them, besides their preaching work, taught Gurmukhi script to the people and wrote *pothis* of the Guru's hymns to be distributed among the people.

Guru Amar Das had the *Bani* of previous two Gurus with him. He alongwith his own compositions compiled these writings in the form of a volume. He also strictly instructed the Sikhs to recite only the *Sachi Bani* (Real compositions of the Gurus) and to beware of the *Kachi Bani* (Spurious writings).¹⁰

Guru Amar Das, with his clarity of vision and his determined policy to lend a distinctive entity to the Sikh people, not only stabilised the Sikh community and saved it from a possible relapse into Brahmanical Hinduism but also paved the way for its rapid strides in future. Guru Amar Das breathed his last on September 1, 1574 but before his death he had already appointed his son-in-law Bhai Jetha Ji as his successor. The compilation of the *Gurbani* was also handed over to the fourth successor.

Bhai Jetha Ji came to be known as Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. He was born of the Sodhi family of Chuna Mandi, Lahore on September 24, 1534. While serving alongwith other Sikhs in the construction of the *Baoli* at Goindwal, he attracted the attention of Guru Amar Das and received the hand of his daughter Bibi Bhani in marriage. Thereafter he stayed with his father-in-law and was closely associated with his ministry. He put on record many incidents connected with the struggles, which his master had with his opponents, and as such his writings are a mine of information about the period. He had made himself so indispensable that his choice for the *Guruship* was a forgone conclusion.

In order to avoid any possible unpleasantness with the relatives of the last Guru, Guru Ram Das shifted his residence to the present site of Amritsar which had been chosen by Guru Amar Das and where some

10. *Ibid.*, Ramkali Anand, p. 920.

construction work had already been done.

During his ministry he further consolidated the institutions of *Sangat*, *Guru ka Langar* and *Kirtan*. He also saw the planning and construction of the new city of Amritsar. He caused Amritsar (pool of Nectar) and *Santokhsar* (pool of Patience) to be excavated. He appointed *Masands* who performed the role of Sikh missionaries. Each *Masand* was allotted a definite area to preach and to organize the Sikh *Sangat*. *Masand* is a Punjabi form of the word *Masnad* a shorter form of *Masnad-i-Ala* or his 'Excellency'. Though the exact number of *Masands* and their respective areas are not known yet this much is certain that very many Sikhs famous for piety and integrity, were asked to act as *Masands*.

Guru Ram Das invited men of 52 trades to take up their residence at Amritsar and to open their business in the city. A particular market was established which came to be known, later on as *Guru Ka Bazar*. Such was the Guru's interest to inhabit the city that Amritsar became the biggest centre of trade in the north.

Like his predecessors, Guru Ram Das also composed hymns which were added with the hymns of the first three Gurus. Guru Ram Das's hymns were historically important because he narrated the accounts of Guru Amar Das's travelling to the different places. The Guru breathed his last on September 1, 1581.

Guru Ram Das was very humble but an intellectual and soft-spoken. It is said that when Baba Sri Chand once came to meet the Guru he remarked that the Guru had grown a long beard. The Guru replied, "yes, I have grown a long beard so that I may wipe thy feet therewith"; and he actually proceeded to do so. Baba Sri Chand held back and said, "O great king, thou art senior, thou art in my father's place. It is magic like this which hath made thee a Guru. I possess no such power and therefore I was superseded. I cannot express thy greatness. The Sikhs who come to behold thee shall be saved."¹¹ The Guru's deep humility and his spirit of service and devotion throughout his life was a great source of inspiration for his Sikhs.

Thus, when Guru Arjan ascended the *Guruship*, the Sikh society was well-organised and well-established. The danger of the Sikhs

11. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*, Vol. I (The Sikh Gurus: 1469-1708), New Delhi, 1994, p. 127.

yielding to the pressure of Hinduism or of falling under the spell of ascetic parasites was largely warded off. There was also a great deal of expansion in their ranks. The Sikhs were now well-set on the road of becoming a well-knit and growing community with a definite ideology and a distinct institutional structure.

GURU ARJAN'S MARTYRDOM: IDEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr G.S. Dhillon^{*}

Religion has always exercised a very potent influence on the Sikh way of life. Martyrdom in Sikhism is closely related to the message of the Sikh Gurus, their world-view and their religious and social ideas. Guru Nanak's revolutionary ideology aimed at evoking a powerful response in the very depths of the people's hearts. He declared that 'truthful living is higher than Truth itself.'¹ Ideals of service and sacrifice, laid down for his followers, are entirely consistent with the Guru's life-affirming view that this world is 'the Abode of the True One'² and hence a place for righteous deeds (*Dharamsal*).³ Guru promoted a societal religion, aimed at social salvation, in clear distinction to the goal of individual salvation preached by the earlier religious systems of Indian sub-continent.

Alongwith glorification of God's name, through prayer and contemplation, the Guru granted sanction to a householder's life. Social philosophy of Guru Nanak found expression in the institutions of Gurudwara, *Sangat*, *Pangat*, *Langar* etc. These institutions enjoin egalitarianism and a social context for the practice of religion. He raised his voice of protest against the tyranny of the invaders and rulers. The Guru, in pursuit of his societal religion, urged his followers to realise their obligation to fellow men and society. He exhorted them to play the 'game of love' without fear of losing their lives :

"Blessed are those who die in the service of the Lord
Such heroes will be honoured in God's court."⁴

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1. *Guru Granth Sahib*, p. 62.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 294.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 785.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 579.

Guru Nanak's revolutionary concept of social responsibility released dynamic forces in the arena of Indian history. The concept of martyrdom has emanated directly from the Guru's teachings. In fact, martyrdom is an expression of the soul-stirring impulse which inspires service and supreme sacrifice. This impulse has operated very strongly in Sikh history.

Next three successors of Guru Nanak contributed a lot towards building the socio-religious structure and the moral and spiritual upliftment of the newly formed community. Only a high moral force and spiritual fervour could bring out the virtues and values of the Guru's followers. Endeavours of Guru Nanak's successors were directed at strengthening the institutional frame-work of the community.

The fifth Guru Arjan re-affirmed and strengthened Guru Nanak's mission in unmistakable terms. His role in boosting the societal religion is outstanding and noteworthy. He took the sagacious decision to compile the *Adi Granth* as the Sikh scripture in order to establish the spiritual and ideological identity of the Sikh religion. Written in Gurmukhi script the *Granth* became the nucleus of the Sikh way of life and all religious observances. It is noteworthy that the *Granth Sahib* is the only scripture in the world that accords divinity to the compilation of holy men of different faiths. Guru wanted the distinctive message of Sikhism to be passed on to the succeeding generations. After its compilation the *Granth*, as the final doctrinal authority, was installed at the *Harmandar Sahib*, Amritsar. *Harmandar Sahib*, apart from being the principal place of worship also became the rallying centre of the Sikhs.

Guru Arjan raised his voice against the erosion of human and moral values. His social concern is reflected in his clear injunction to his followers 'to destroy the falsehood and remain firm on *Dharma*'.⁵ He also said, 'Do not delay the acts of *Dharma*, let there be delay in sinful act.'⁶ He identified *Dharma* with the pursuit of Truth and righteousness and the protection of basic human rights. He exhorted his followers to lead a valorous life of dignity and honour. A cardinal principle of Guru's philosophy was egalitarianism and an ethical social order. He spoke of all-embracing spirituality with emphasis on moral and spiritual freedom. He proclaimed the freedom of man as a basic

5. *Ibid.*, p. 518.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 1354.

human right in the name of God. Freedom of the self was made the basis of social freedom. Ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity loudly proclaimed by the Western society in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries were clearly proclaimed by the Guru in a socio-political milieu, marked by intolerance and orthodoxy.

Mughal state, under orthodox emperor Jahangir, was becoming increasingly intolerant of non-Muslims who were subjected to discriminatory and inhuman treatment. Guru Arjan knew that he had a definite mission and a mandatory social duty to perform. As an instrument of the Divine Will for upholding the cause of righteousness he was linked with the highest reality. Looking upon him as an instrument of God on earth the Sikhs called their Guru 'True Emperor' (*Sachcha Padshah*). The Sikh society had become a 'state within a state', a parallel socio-political organisation. Emperor Jahangir came to look upon it as an undesirable socio-political growth. Guru's social mission of emancipation of man was an anathema to the Mughal ruler, who imposed a heavy fine of Rs. two lakhs on the Guru. The Guru could have saved his life by allowing his followers to pay the fine imposed on him but he preferred, as he told Sain Mian Meer, to suffer torture and death to set an example of moral courage and fearlessness.

Guru Arjan's martyrdom cannot be viewed in terms of the narrow perspective of the antagonism of the age. It has to be viewed in terms of the polarity of the good and evil. In the sublime vision of the Guru, there was no room for moral relativism or ethical dualities. The approach of the Guru was not sectarian. It was free from dogma and religious fanaticism. The Guru envisioned an all-inclusive integrated polity based on the principle of democratic collectivism. He proclaimed, "All are equal partners in this Commonwealth, with none looked upon as alien."⁷

Inspired by the vision of creating God's kingdom on this earth (*Haleemi Raj*), the Guru looked upon himself as an instrument of God's Attributive will. Guru's sacrifice was not for sectarian ends.

Through the supreme act of martyrdom, the Guru fulfilled a Divine purpose. This memorable event in the annals of Sikh history created a new consciousness of strength, self-respect and spiritual

7. *Ibid.*, p. 97.

awakening in the Sikh community. Guru Arjan became the first martyr in Sikh history. With his martyrdom, the Guru made it absolutely clear that he had a dynamic role to be assigned to his followers, entirely different from the earlier quietistic and other-worldly religious systems. Sikhs had to be free not only from the shackles of caste, but also from the strangle-hold of priests claiming to be the sole mediums of religious growth, practice and interpretation. Guru Arjan gave a tremendous boost to Guru Nanak's mission of creating a society with new motivation and ideals. He gave a call for direct confrontation with the Mughal Empire.

Under instructions from his father, the sixth Guru Hargobind started militarising the *Panth* and donned two swords of *Miri* and *Piri*. Creation of the *Khalsa*, imbued with ideal of saint-soldier (*Sant-Sipahi*), by the tenth Guru Gobind Singh was an epitome of Guru Nanak's mission. When the call for sacrifices was given, *Khalsa* throbbed with full response to free the society from the tyranny of the rulers and the priests. It became evident that only spiritually motivated people could tread the path of sacrifice and martyrdom and create history. Sikh history, in all its phases, bears ample testimony to this.

Thus Guru Arjan's martyrdom left an indelible stamp on the Sikh way of life. It was a unique event of far-reaching consequences in the history of India. It set a glorious example of fearlessness, moral courage and sacrifice, while playing the game of love. Throughout the entire span of their eventful history, there are examples of thousands of Sikhs, who followed in the foot steps of the Guru and smilingly wore the crown of martyrdom on their heads. They laid down their lives with a firm conviction that it was a paramount religious duty to uphold human freedom and equality and to counter the forces of tyranny and injustice. During the turbulent eighteenth century, when the Sikhs were subjected to barbaric tortures, the intense faith kindled in them by the Gurus never wavered. At all times in their history the Sikhs have sought inspiration from their tradition to sustain themselves.

MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN DEV : SOME ISSUES IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr G.S. Nayyar^{*}

There has been heated discussion among historians and writers about the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev. Strenuous efforts to probe into the truth have found some rest and relief with the statement of Emperor Jahangir coming to lime-light in which he has shown his desire and inclination to stop what he terms as '*dukan-e-baatal*' (false shop) of Guru Arjan. However, still there is need to delve on some significant issues in view of the conflicting statements and interpretations being presented even to this day.

Glimpses of the back-drop reflect that Akbar, the Great Mughal, unlike his predecessors provided a uniform system of administration to his kingdom mainly due to his political acumen and *suleh-i-kul* or tolerant religious policy and paved the way for creating a common feeling among his subjects. He managed to mould the conflicting opinions of the Muslim jurists and also could successfully followed a line of conduct or policy in non-controversial matters provided those were in consonance with the verse of *Quran*.¹ Abu'l Fazl observes that Emperor Akbar was 'broad-minded enough to hate narrow religious feelings.'

Abu'l Fazl² in his historic and great treatise *Akbarnama* presents a reference to Emperor Akbar's meeting with Guru Arjan in the year

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1. A.L. Srivastva, *The Mughal Empire*, Agra, 1952, pp. 173,181.

2. Abu'l Fazl, the author of *Akbarnama* was a seasoned scholar of the court of Emperor Akbar. Born on 14 January 1551 in the house of Sheikh Mubarak Nagori at Akbarabad; he got an appointment in the said Court as a *munshi* and was raised to the high rank of *wazir* and close confidant of the Emperor. It is said that Salim (later on Emperor Jahangir) was envious of him and got him finished on 12th August, 1602. *Makhiz-e-Tawarikh-e-Sikhan* (ed. Ganda Singh), Sikh History Society, Amritsar, 1949, pp. 17-18.

1598.³ He states : 'on 13 *Azar* (4th November, 1598) His Majesty crossed the river Beas on an elephant near Gobindwal, which the troops crossed over by a (boat) bridge. On this day, the house of Guru Arjan received fresh lustre through His Majesty alighting... And he has great store of (spiritual) love. Since his hope (for a visit from His Majesty) arose out of (sincere) devotion. His Majesty accepted his invitation.'⁴ This not only shows Akbar's liberal religious policy towards other religions but also his reverence towards the Sikh Guru.

Whereas during the reign of Akbar no religious binding, restriction or torture was witnessed, Jahangir's accession to the throne as the successor of Akbar raised the hope of orthodox Muslim theologians that he would restore to Islam the position which it had occupied before Akbar had disestablished it as the religion of the State. They tried to convert him to their own views in order to persuade him to reverse the work of secularising the State that his great father had almost completed. He took greater interest in the fortune of Islam than his father had done and sometimes he tried to uphold its prestige though temporary fits are observed in his behaviour while dealing with the major religious systems of his times.

As a matter of fact, upto the time of Guru Arjan, Sikh Gurus had contributed enough towards building up of Sikhism. Every Sikh Guru shared intensively in the spread of Sikh faith during his pontificate. Mobid Mohsin Fani states that 'the strength of Sikhs increased during the pontificate of each Sikh Guru, till in the time of Guru Arjan they became numerous and there were not many cities in the inhabitant countries where some Sikhs were not to be found.'⁵ This contribution is particularly witnessed in the work of religion and public welfare. Resultantly, Sikh religion emerged as a popular and meaningful religion. Since Sikhism had established its root, it became an object of attraction

3. The original reads: *Sis dahm aazr, 13 aazr year 43 jalus Akbar Badshah (24 Nov., 1598) nizz Goindwal daryae Beeha bafaseel guzashta wa ferozi sipah barah pul—darin roz manzil Arjan Gur az qadam shehnshahi taaza farokh bar grift Ibid., p.19.*

4. Translated into English from a printed version (detailed of publication given) by Shireen Moosvi under the title 'Akbar meets Guru Arjan, 1598' in *Sikh History from Persian Sources* (eds. J.S. Grewal and Irfan Habib), Tulika, New Delhi, 2001, p. 55.

5. Mobid (Mohsin Fani / Zulfqar Ardistani), '*Dabistan-e-Muzahib*' in *Makhiz-e-Tawarikh-e-Sikhan*, Amritsar, 1949, p. 34; (tr. Ganda Singh), *The Panjab Past and Present*, Patiala, April 1967, p. 57.

for the rebel Prince Khusro. Guru Arjan had become very popular among the Hindus and Muslims as well; there was every probability of his influence being increased in future as well. The *vars* of Bhai Gurdas reflect that the followers of Guru Nanak were in a stable position having full faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak. Emperor Jahangir felt annoyed on the spread of Sikhism. In spite of having not been fanatic, he had to be so for political purposes during the beginning of his rule. He had to make commitments for the upholding of Islam after setting the opposition of Prince Khusrau at rest. His prejudiced thinking against Sikh religion is quite evident from his *Tuzuk*. The meeting of Prince Khusro with the Guru at Goindwal (which is not agreed upon by the author of *Mehma Parkash*, who writes that the Guru was at Tarn Taran at that time) became simply an excuse for the arrest of the Guru. Much has been already said on the wrong confinement of Guru Arjan by the Emperor holding him an accused in the rebellion of the Prince.⁶

Before dealing with the issue of sentence of Guru Arjan, his torture and martyrdom, let us not set aside the role of Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujadid-e-Alf-Sani and Murtaza Khan along with that of their followers in aggravating the rage of the prejudiced Emperor.

As a matter of fact, the Mujadid and his staunch follower were the supreme leaders of the Muslim Revivalist Movement who were having apprehensions of losing their grip over the *Majha* region from where they were hoping to get conversions for their favourite religion of Islam. They poured it in the ears of the Emperor that Islam was in danger on account of the most acceptable and popular preaching of Guru Arjan, the fourth successor of Guru Nanak. The concoction of Guru Arjan's hand in favouring Prince Khusro proved fatal for Guru Arjan against whom the Emperor passed orders for his torture to death. His property was ordered to be confiscated. He was handed over to Murtaza Khan without making any sort of investigation before or after the announcement of rash, severe and unsought for punishment. The Emperor wrote in his *Tuzuk*: 'In Goindwal,... there lived a Hindu, named Arjan, in the garb of *pir* and *sheikh* so much so that having

6. For details see, J.S. Grewal, 'Guru Arjan Dev ate ohnan da Yug', in the unpublished key-note address of 23rd International Punjabi Vikas Conference, Pbi. Univ. Patiala, December 2006; also see, Ganda Singh, *Early Europeans' Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 47.

captivated many simple hearted Hindus, nay even foolish and stupid Muslims, by his ways and manners, he had noised himself about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all directions fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For years the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam.'

'At last when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow made up his mind to wait upon him. Khusrau happened to halt at the place where he was. He (Guru Arjan) came and saw him, and conveyed some preconceived things to him and made on his forehead a finger-mark in saffron, which the Hindus in their terminology call *qashqa* (*tilk*) and is considered propitious. When this came to the ears of our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, and having handed over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtaza Khan, and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures'.

'There were two other persons, Rajoo and Amba by name. They led a life of tyranny and oppression under the shadow of Daulat Khan Khwaja-sera's protection. During the few days when Khusrau was near Lahore, they committed depredations. I ordered that Rajoo be hanged and that a fine be levied on Amba because he was known to be a rich man. One lakh and fifteen thousand rupees were received from him. This amount I ordered to be spent upon artillery and for charitable purposes.'⁷

Let us now probe into the allied issues of the said sentence and the martyrdom. Mobid states that the Guru was 'fined for the reason that he had prayed for the welfare of Prince Khusro - the Guru was unable to pay. Having imprisoned him, they kept him in the sandy desert of Lahore.'⁸ Letter from a Padre Fr Jerome Xavier written on 25th September 1606, the earliest note from a European whose information does not seem to be correct on account of the fact that he never had a meeting with the Guru, states that the Guru was fined 100,000

7. 'Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri' in *Makhiz-e-Tawarikh-e-Sikhan*, pp. 20-22; see also, quoted in *Early Europeans' Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 46. European scholars have tried to interpret the word *Shaheed* in their own way. See Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, New Delhi, 2000, pp. 3, 7.

8. 'Dabistan', *op.cit.*, pp. 35-36; *The Panjab Past and Present*, April, 1967, pp. 59-60.

cruzados. It was done as a rich pagan (*kafir*) became a surety for him.⁹ This is to be emphatically argued here that no mention of any fine or surety is found in the *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri* or any other contemporary record. Sarup Das Bhalla writing in 1776 A.D.¹⁰ states that the Emperor imposed a fine of rupees two lacs on the bidding of Chandu. Bhai Santokh Singh has also no evidence to confirm that the fine was imposed on Guru and he refused to pay it. Sikh tradition, oral as well as written speaks of Chandu's serious involvement in the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. It is held that it was on his bidding that the fine was imposed; he was the person who stood as a surety for the Guru - all this seems to be unhistorical without any solid evidence. *Mehma Parkash* cites no evidence or proof relating to this statement. Sohan Lal Suri also talks about the complaint of Chandu against the Guru to the Emperor. *Mehma Parkash* holds :

*Ek dusht Chandu Sahi tin Patshah pai chugli laai.*¹¹

We come across the written evidence of fines imposed on certain individuals by the Emperor. But in this case no penalty is ever mentioned anywhere. So, far as the making of finger-mark on Khusrau's forehead in saffron is concerned, this seems to be a concoction since it had not remained a custom of the Sikhs. The practice had been in vogue among the Sikhs only on the eve of pontificate of the Gurus. George Forster writing in 1798 A.D. states that Guru Arjan 'having incurred the displeasure of a Hindoo (named Chaundoo) favoured by Jahanguir, was committed by that prince to the persecution of his enemy; and his death which happened in the year 1606 at Lahore, was caused it is said, by the rigours of confinement.'¹² It implies that Chandu's guilt and responsibility for the crime was fully acknowledged by the sources other than the Sikhs as well even by way of long lingering tradition, though his name is not found in any contemporary or near contemporary records.

The major cause of this misunderstanding seems to be that sources like *Tuzuk-e-Jahangiri* or *Maktubat* were not taken notice of at the

9. *Early Europeans' Accounts of the Sikhs*, p. 48.

10. *Mehma Parkash*, II, p. 391.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 311.

12. *A Journey from Bengal to England*, Languages Deptt., Punjab, Patiala, I, 1970 (reprint), pp. 297-98.

early stage. The contents of the letter written by Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to Murtza Khan is an eye opener and reveals how contented and Jubilant he felt on the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. He wrote that the Guru's killing was a good achievement indeed and was in a way a great defeat of the hateful Hindus. The object of levying *jeziya* on them was to humiliate and insult them.¹³

In such a situation it seems difficult to imagine that the Guru could have been handed over in the custody of Chandu who was himself a Hindu and could release the Guru if his personal demand was accepted by him. All this leads us to accept that the prejudiced Emperor excited by the fanatic advisers, adversaries and the rivals of Guru Arjan led to his martyrdom. Finally, his body, which was full of blisters, was dipped in the waters of the Ravi which may be taken as another torture. Rattan Singh Bhangu asks if Guru Arjan was not put into the river ?

*kia Gur Arjan daryai na boryo?*¹⁴

Kesar Singh Chhibbar like most of the Sikh writers considering Chandu responsible highlights the end of the tragedy in the words :

*dokhi khatri baad uthaea khakhe da khakha veri hunda aaea
odak bandh ke reti vich sutaee jeth maas di dhup pinda sar jaae.*¹⁵

13. *Maktubat-I*, iii, Letter no. 193, pp. 95-96, quoted by Ganda Singh, 'The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan', *The Panjab Past and Present*, April 1978, p. 170.

14. *Prachin Panth Prakash*, written in early 19th century.

15. *Bansavalinama Dasan Patshahian ka* (1769), (ed. Piara Singh Padam), Amritsar, 1997, p. 85.

MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN DEV IN THE CONTEXT OF SIKH CONCEPT AND TRADITION

Dr Harnam Singh Shan *

Martyrdom is a Semitic concept, peculiar to the Semitic religions of the world. Its doctrine appears to go back to old Oriental and Hellenistic ideas. The literal and primary meaning of the word *uaprus* in Greek, *martyr* in English and *shahid* in Arabic is 'witness'. It has quite often been used in that very sense in the holy *Bible*¹ and the holy *Quran*.²

The word, *martyr* variation of Greek 'martys', acquired its modern connotation during the conflict between Paganism and Christianity, when many Christians 'testified to the truth of their convictions' by sacrificing their own lives.³ A similar development of its Arabic synonym, *shahid*, took place under Christian influence, and it also began to be used⁴ for the one 'who dies in witness of his faith' or who 'seals his belief with his death while fighting against the infidels'.⁵

Sikhism adopted the concept, alongwith its current form and usage, from Islam, extending it by introducing a new dimension and a universal outlook. It set thereby, its currency in Indian society which, because of its conformist approach and escapist tendency, had previously remained almost deficient of great heroic deeds of such martyrdom and did not cherish it in that context before the advent of

* 605, Sector 16-D, Chandigarh.

1. *Holy Bible* : 'New Testament', e.g., Math xviii, 16; Mark xiv, 63.

2. *Holy Quran*, e.g., sura ii, 127; sura iii, 93; sura iv, 71.

3. *New Testament*, Act xxii, 20; Rev, ii, 13; Fox Rev. John, *An Universal History of Christian Martyrdom*, London-1824, Book I; *Persecution in the Early Church*, London-1906 by Workman, H.B.

4. It has not been used exactly in this very sense in the *Qur'an*, but is very much there throughout the *Hadith* and subsequent Islamic literature.

5. Houtsma, M. Th., etc. (ed.), *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Vol. IV, Leydon-1934, p. 259.

the Sikh Movement which, in fact, introduced it in the Aryan tradition.

Martyrdom, as such, has been associated primarily with religion and its traditions, originating in some cases from indications given in their respective scriptures.⁶ It generally arises from a strong conflict between two different religious traditions or out of the confrontation between the religion and the state, taking it as a challenge to the establishment - its authority, sway and sovereignty. It results in the latter case, from the undue interference by the state authorities in the sphere of religion. This, in turn, causes reaction and results in protest which is followed soon by repression and persecution, resisted in consequence by the votaries of the concerned religion. This is evident, for example, in the case of the conflict between Christianity and the Roman Empire. The Roman Government ordered Christians to abandon their faith and also to prove its abandonment by offering sacrifices to the gods. When Christians resisted and refused to do so, they were persecuted relentlessly and executed. This is equally evident in the terrible situation that prevailed in India during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb (1618-1707 A.D.) when, above all, a famous *Sufi*, like Sarmad, and a great Guru, like Guru Tegh Bahadur, had to offer themselves for such a martyrdom.

But all religious traditions are not endowed with this great and proud privilege. It does not exist, for instance, in that specific form and usage, in Hinduism, Buddhism⁷ and Jainism; in Babylonian and Abyssinian lores; or in Chinese and Japanese religions;⁸ or among the adherents of materialistic schools of thought and philosophies. However, notions of self-abnegation and self-annihilation as well as the compassionate feelings for others are found almost in all historical religions in one form or the other. Moreover, there is no dearth of men, women and children, during all those ages, who were either offered in

6. For example, *New Testament*, Act xxii, 20, Rev. ii, 13; sura iii, 161 of *Qur'an*; Arjan Dev, Guru (ed.), *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, Amritsar-1604, Rag Vadhans, p. 558., See also 'Slokas', pp. 555, 1105 and 1365, etc.

7. The self-imposed sufferings exhibited by some devotees for becoming Boddhi-sattvas; neither involved persecution nor constituted martyrdom.

8. Hastings, J. (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Edinburg-1920, Vol. IX, pp. 50, 75 etc.; Hardy, R.S., *A Manual of Buddhism*, London-1890, pp. 349 ff; Shan, Dr. Harnam Singh, *Conception of Martyrdom in Chinese and Japanese Civilizations*, Guru Tegh Bahadur's Martyrdom, Tercentenary Seminar-paper, Chandigarh-1967; Giles, H.A., *Confucianism And Its Rivals*, London-1915, p. 1; etc. etc.

sacrifice for numerous rites and rituals or who had themselves suffered torture and death, of their own accord,⁹ for various other causes, ideas, opinions and superstitions,¹⁰ such as the Japanese Soldier's ceremonial rites, *Hara-kiri*, and the Hindu custom of *Sattee*, i.e. widow-burning in India.

On the other hand, Zoroastrianism, Judaism,¹¹ Christianity, Islam and Sikhism, for example, preserve, more or less, rich and strong traditions of martyrdom, martyrology, martyr and martyrolatry. The prominent acts of eminent persons associated with these traditions form a glorious chapter in the histories of religions and philosophies of the world. For instance, 'Aqiba (50-130 A.D.), the saintly Jewish teacher, suffered martyrdom in the cause of propagation of the *Torah* in defiance of an imperial edict. Socrates (470-390 B.C.), the well-known Greek philosopher, drank to death the cup of poison in order to vindicate his lofty ideal. The Persian prophet, Zoroaster (583 B.C.), and the blessed founder of Christianity, Jesus, laid down their precious lives in defence of their respective faiths. Islam has in al-Husain (603-660 A.D.) the 'King of martyrs' for the *Shias* and in Mansur al-Hallaj (858-922 A.D.), the 'martyr *par excellence*' for the Sufis - the former having been killed in Karbala while fighting the battle of Islam and the latter cruelly executed in Baghdad on the charges of heterodoxy.¹²

But no proper martyrology appears to have developed in Islam¹³ comparable to the pattern of Christianity that can feel justly proud of embodying, probably, the richest tradition in this domain, with its

9. For instance, the custom of *Sati* in India, the practice of infanticide in Arabia and the vogue of self-immolation in Vietnam, etc. See *Sacrifice in the Rigveda*; Verkes, R.K., *Sacrifice in the Greek and Roman Religions and Early Judaism*, New York-1952; Henry, H., *Sacrifice; Its Nature and Function*, London-1964 etc.

10. Reode, W. Winwood, *The Martyrdom of Man*, London-1872, pp. 152, 179, 228, etc.; Money-Kyrle, R., *The Meaning of Sacrifice*, London-1929, pp. 78-79, etc.

11. In Judaism, for instance, we find many devoted persons accepting "torture and death rather than a life in which the Law of God had no place". The memory of martyrdom suffered by them in the reign of emperor Hadrian (2nd century A.D.) is preserved in a celebrated prayer recited till today in all places of Jewish worship on the Day of Atonement.

12. Hughes, T.P., *A Dictionary of Islam*, London-1885, p. 327; See Williams Jackson, A.V., *Zoroaster*, New York-1961; Hardy, R.S., *A Manual of Buddhism*, London-1890, pp. 349 ff.; *A Literary History of Persia*, London-1902, Vol. I, p. 430, etc., by Browne, H.G.

13. Although rich and moving literature is available describing the sufferings of Al-Husain and other members of the family of the Prophet Muhammad.

martyred founder himself standing at its fountain-head, whose martyrdom, in fact, gave birth to this religion.

It may, however, be noted in the case of Christianity that the fortitude of its early martyrs¹⁴ who staked and laid their lives bearing 'witness' to Jesus Christ, just as he himself had borne 'witness' to God, won the admiration and veneration of their brethren during the first three centuries. But in later days, "the passion, at times, became artificial. Fanatics sought death by insulting the magistrates or by breaking idols, and in their enthusiasm for martyrdom became self-centered and forgetful of their normal duty. Nonetheless, it is true that these men and women endured torments and death rather than abandon their faith. The same phenomena have been witnessed not only in the conflicts within the Church but also in the different missionary fields."¹⁵ Martyrdom for them has been enduring voluntary suffering or having undergone sure death for a cause or having been put to death specifically as a witness to Christ or in hatred of Christian life and truth.

On the other hand, in Islam the conception of *Shahid* itself, according to Bjorkman, "underwent an important extension... so that in the end almost any one who had died any violent death¹⁶ and aroused pity was considered by the general public to be a martyr and soon was actually regarded as a saint..." Hughes tells us that "according to Muhammedan Law, not only those who die in witness of or in defence of the faith¹⁷ are martyrs, but all those who die such deaths as are calculated to excite the compassion and pity of their fellow-beings."¹⁸ As far as Islam in India is concerned, nineteen other ways of attaining the glory of martyrdom have been enumerated by Prof. Arnold, for example, dying while reciting *Qur'an* or while praying, being murdered by robbers or struck by lightning etc. We are further told that in the beginning, the praise of martyrs and the great privileges said to be

14. Like St. Stephen, St. Peter, St. Paul, Saul, Antopas and Ignatius.

15. See Mason, A.J., *The Historic Martyrs of the Primitive Church*, London-1905.

16. For example, Sur Sadi who is venerated as a martyr. (Rose, H.A., *A Glossary of the Castes and Tribes of the Punjab and the North-Western Frontier Province of India*, Lahore-1919, Vol. II, p. 169).

17. Among those who are said to have died in battle with the Hindus in India, Salar Masud is considered to be the most famous.

18. *A Dictionary of Islam*, op. cit., p. 327.

awaiting them in Heaven led to a longing to meet a martyr's death. But it was by no means encouraged by the orthodox theology who rather deprecated it, because this kind of self-sacrifice looked very much like suicide which has always been condemned in Islam."¹⁹ According to Ezzati, however, "the concept of martyrdom (*Shahadat*) in Islam is linked with the entire religion of Islam..... There is no martyrdom without struggle in the cause of Allah and for the cause of truth Thus one is a *mujahid* while one lives and a *martyr* if he dies or is killed for it."²⁰

Martyrology of the aforesaid pattern did develop, properly and consistently, in the case of Sikhism; and that too with a significant difference and at variance from both the Christian and Islamic concepts and traditions. In it the word, *martyr* or *shahid*, diverges from its primary and limited meaning of 'testimony'. It implies and connotes, on the other hand, a holistic concept of martyrdom of *Shahadat* as a selfless heroic deed of sublime self-sacrifice for a lofty and righteous cause with a universal outlook in a comprehensive form.

Guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.), the founder, himself set the norm and ideal of this concept, and also its tradition in Sikhism, by basing it on the cornerstone of self-sacrifice for a righteous cause or a noble altruistic deed. The socio-religious and political conditions of Hindus, the original natives of India, stood so much degraded and reduced during his times that, according to Prof. Peter Hardy, they were considered as "furniture and properties for the stage on which the drama of the Muslim destiny... in Hindustan is played. The Hindus are... as the passive material on which the Muslims impose their will. It is the function of the Hindus to provide opportunities for the practice of Muslim virtue; they are never interesting in themselves, but only as converts, as capitation tax-payers or as corpses."²¹ In the words of Dr. Sir Gokal Chand Narang, "after centuries of (such) subjection, Guru Nanak was the first among the Hindus to raise his voice against (such) tyranny and oppression"²² of the Lodi-Mughal India. At the same time,

19. See Wensinck, A.U., *Handbook of Early Muhammedan Tradition*, S.V. Martyrs in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, op. cit., Vol. IV, p. 260.

20. Ezatti, A., *The Concept of Martyrdom in Islam*, AR-Serat, Vol. XII, 1986.

21. Hardy, Dr. Peter, *Historians of Medieval India*, London-1960, p. 114.

22. Narang, Dr. Sir Gokal Chand, *Transformation of Sikhism*, Lahore-1912; 5th ed., New Delhi-1960, p. 25.

“his was the first and also the last successful attempt”, says Prof. Majumdar, “to bring together the Hindus and Muslims in a common fold of spiritual and social brotherhood.”²³ His following pronouncement, therefore, showed from the very beginning the form and course it followed :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ,
ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ।
ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ,
ਸਿਰ ਦੀਜੈ ਕਾਣਿ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ।²⁴

If you are keen to play the game of love,
step into my street
with your head placed on your palm.
(That is, in complete surrender and fervour)²⁴

Having set your foot upon it,
lay down your head without any fear or grudge.²⁴

According to this and other similar pronouncements made by him²⁵ and his spiritual successors, a true martyr is one who, imbued with the love of God (*Simran*) and service of mankind (*Seva*) offers himself for supreme sacrifice for the cause of upholding truth, defending *Dharma* (righteousness) protecting people's human rights and ensuring their fundamental freedoms. He does it, at all costs and in the face of challenges from any side, in order to defend, thereby, the right against wrong, justice against injustice, and for serving and safeguarding any other and allied noble cause. While treading the path of martyrdom, he shuns all pressures and inducements, bears all tortures and torments, fears no death; and expects no power, material gain or victory for himself, his country or community. He is such a wise and valiant person who according to the following dictum of his Ninth Prophet preceptor, neither frightens anyone nor is afraid of anyone:

23. Majumdar, Prof. R.C. & Pusalkar, A.D., *History and Culture of the Indian People*, Vol. VI, Bombay-1951, p. 569.

24. Guru Nanak Dev in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *op. cit.*, Slok no. 20, p.1412; also Gurdas, Bhai, *Varan*, Amritsar-1606 (cir.), no.3. st.18.

25. Preserved in original, in *Guru Granth Sahib*, compiled in 1604 at Amritsar by Guru Arjan Dev, fifth in his apostolic line, and also in *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib*, compiled in 1713 A.D., by Bhai Mani Singh at Amritsar.

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ,
ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ।²⁶

This is so in Sikhism because Guru Nanak, its illuminant founder had himself confirmed that he alone becomes a martyr, who, egolessly and selflessly, has chosen a noble cause of heroic action and performed a laudable act of sublime self-sacrifice, choosing to suffer sure death rather than to renounce his faith, belief, principle or cause. He even went to the extent of exhorting people:

1. ਮਰਣੁ ਨ ਮੰਦਾ ਲੋਕਾ ਆਖੀਐ,
ਜੇ ਕੋਈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਣੈ। ...
 2. ਉਚਾ ਨਹੀ ਕਹਣਾ, ਮਨ ਮਹਿ ਰਹਣਾ,
ਆਪੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਜਾਣੈ।
 3. ਮਰਣੁ ਮੁਣਸਾ ਸੂਰਿਆ ਹਕੁ ਹੈ,
ਜੇ ਹੋਇ ਮਰਨਿ ਪਰਵਾਣੈ।²⁷
1. Listen O people ! do not revile death.
It is not an evil
provided one knows how truly to die...
 2. They (i.e. such heroic persons) do not utter aloud
their suffering
and bear all that heroically.
God the All-knower himself knows all that.
 3. The death of heroic men is holy
If they die for a righteous cause.²⁷

Saint Kabir has also voiced a similar view in the following verse, also included in the said sacred scripture of the Sikhs :

ਕਬੀਰ ਮਰਤਾ ਮਰਤਾ ਜਗੁ ਮੁਆ,
ਮਰਿ ਭਿ ਨ ਜਾਨੈ ਕੋਇ;
ਐਸੀ ਮਰਨੀ ਜੋ ਮਰੈ,
ਬਹੁਰਿ ਨ ਮਰਨਾ ਹੋਇ।²⁸

The whole world has been facing death all along,
but few know how to die while living,
Yea, one who dies this way,
does not die ever again.²⁸

26. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Guru Nanak, Rag Wadhans, p. 579.

27. *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, Slok no. 16 in *Guru Granth Sahib*, p.1427.

28. *Ibid.*, Bhagat Kabir, Slok, Rag Bihagra, p. 555.

Vindicating such a lofty principle and cherishing such a proud privilege as an article of faith, the Sikh Martyr has been proceeding on the chosen path by announcing and praying :

ਜਾਨ ਜਾਇ ਤਾਂ ਜਾਏ

ਮੇਰਾ ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਦਕ ਨਾ ਜਾਏ।²⁹

Let my life go, let my body perish,

But let not my faith shake or shatter.²⁹

Believing, at the same time, that by laying down his life for such a glorious cause in such a sublime way, he lives in God at the feet of the *Guru* (Master); he does not bulge even an inch from it, even though no other privilege or higher rank is offered to him or is promised to be awaiting him in Paradise.³⁰ Neither he seeks nor longs for it here or hereafter in lieu thereof, considering his sacrifice as a matter of pre-assurance for any reward in this world or for salvation in the next.³¹ This is again so in Sikhism because it does not aim at such salvation or deliverance which means a static merger with and reabsorption of the individual soul into the universal soul, and finished with it. This is left entirely to the grace of God. The Sikh's duty is confined to right thinking and right actions, enthused although with pulsating love of the Omnipresent and humanity at large. He continues to follow his chosen path, therefore, as (ਹਉ ਗੋਸਾਈਂ ਦਾ ਪਹਿਲਵਾਨੜਾ) "a combatant of God's own legion"³² with complete subordination to His will and with an amazing indifference to rewards and inducements, repeating his Master's plea in his following words :

ਰਾਜੁ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ, ਮੁਕਤਿ ਨ ਚਾਹਉ;

ਮਨਿ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲਾਰੇ।³³

I neither seek kingship nor liberation.

My heart seeks only the love of Your lotus feet.³³

This has all along been so in Sikhism, because it also believes in "the divine principle of the necessity of a just society and the duty of a

29. A very popular adage of the Sikhs which is usually sung by them in a chorus while preparing or heading for a *morcha* or a movement.

30. As has been promised and depicted in numerous *Hadiths* of Islam; or has been mentioned in the case of some Christians of an early period .Cf. Reode, *Martyrdom of Man*, *op. cit.*, pp. 195-96.

31. As, for instance, we learn from the over-flowing zeal and appeal of Ignatius. (*Ibid.*, p. 115).

32. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Sri, p. 74.

33. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Devgandhari, p. 534.

man of God to uphold it.”³⁴ While proclaiming the character and innate nature of God as also the ‘Chastiser of evil’, its blessed founder laid special emphasis on man's imbibing also the ‘sacred character of heroism and sacrifice for upholding righteousness.’ According to him, the spiritually enlightened person must enter into the sphere of common human life and strive to purify it by his example and, if necessary, by sacrificing himself. The man of God must remain ready to meet the challenge of evil and undertake to remove oppression and other varieties of suffering from the world of men, upholding at the same time the higher values of justice and truth, through his *seva* (i.e., dedicated work and selfless service for common good) or *qurbani* (i.e. sacrificial action for a noble cause) for which he already stands pledged with his Master who had told him even before initiation to :

ਪਹਿਲਾ ਮਰਣੁ ਕਬੂਲਿ, ਜੀਵਣ ਕੀ ਛਡਿ ਆਸ,
ਹੋਹੁ ਸਭਨਾ ਕੀ ਰੇਣੁਕਾ, ਤਉ ਆਉ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਪਾਸਿ।³⁵

Accept first the inevitability of death

discard attachment of life

and be the dust for all to tread upon.

After that and that only,

come to me to join my fold.³⁵

Such a pre-condition, demanding complete self-surrender and extreme humility, for such a heroic action naturally involves, ‘in moments of crisis in the history of the people’, even one's standing up to tyranny and despotism, and offering one's own life for common good without any fear or hesitation. It may also involve open and consistent conflict with terrible demons, masquerading in the form of tyrants at various levels. This is fairly evident from the subsequent history of the Sikh people,³⁶ a remarkable record of such an active and continuous struggle with untold sufferings of immense magnitude and enormous consequences.

It may also be noted here that such heroic action has got to be selfless and unalloyed with egoistic motives and also devoid of any show or use of miraculous powers. It has, therefore, been made repeatedly

34. Talib Prof. Gurbachan Singh, *Moral Core of Guru Nanak's Teachings* (ed. Dr. Harnam Singh Shan), Chandigarh-1976, p. 36.

35. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Maru, p. 1102.

36. That is, the followers of Guru Nanak and adherents to the ideal set by him.

clear that it "must proceed from mind denuded of desire, of the expectation of reward", of the fear of failure and "of egoism in all forms."³⁷ The Guru has stated, for example :

ਮਨਸਾ ਆਸਾ ਸਬਦਿ ਜਲਾਈ
ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਪਾਈ।³⁸

The man of God consumes his desires and expectation of reward in the awareness of God.³⁸

This new and creative moral idealism of Guru Nanak carried the seeds of vitalization of the social life through a newly-awakened spirit of responsibility and the realization that men owe a duty to one another and to those principles of justice and morality on which alone social life can be built to be fruitful. While in Guru Nanak's own life, a situation demanding his entering into active conflict with organized tyranny did not happen to arise, his successors, fulfilling the implications of his teaching, did take upon themselves great sacrifices which gave a new inspiration to the people"³⁹ who sang with them their earnest desire in the following words :

ਮਰਣੈ ਕੀ ਚਿੰਤਾ ਨਹੀ, ਜੀਵਣ ਕੀ ਨਹੀ ਆਸ,
ਤੂੰ ਸਰਬ ਜੀਆ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਲਹੀ, ਲੇਖੈ ਸਾਸ ਗਿਰਾਸ।⁴⁰

I have neither any fear of death
nor any passion for life.

I only seek You, O Lord,
Who cherishes all and
in Whose will we breathe and survive.⁴⁰

There is no denying the fact that Guru Nanak himself denounced evil, with all the emphasis at his command, in its various prevalent manifestations, including the stormy onslaught made by Emperor Babar (1483-1530 A.D.), calling him ਜਮ (the regent of death) and his army ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੰਵ (wedding party of sins); condemning the tyrannical deeds of his hordes; voicing the agony of the oppressed people in heart-rending hymns;⁴¹ thus taking all possible risks even to his personal life. "If he escaped martyrdom, it was, perhaps, because the rulers of the day did

37. *Moral Core of Guru Nanak's Teachings*, p. 34.

38. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Ramkali, p. 940.

39. *Moral Core of Guru Nanak's Teachings*, p. 39.

40. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Sri, p. 20.

41. Known as *Babur-Vani*, and included in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Asa, pp. 460, 527-28; Rag Tilang, p. 733-734.

not awake to his full meaning, under the impression that he was, after all, a Sadhu. But he was much more", and "his was the voice of the prophet who shakes and rebuilds from the roots the moral life of the people" by calling men to the path of God on the one hand and by combating the entrenched evil on the other, reminding and assuring them, at the same time, that

ਮਰਣੁ ਮੁਣਸਾ ਸੂਰਿਆ ਹਕੁ ਹੈ, ਜੋ ਹੋਇ ਮਰਨਿ ਪਰਵਾਣੈ;
ਸੂਰੇ ਸੇਈ ਆਗੈ ਆਖੀਆਇ, ਦਰਗਹ ਪਾਵਹਿ ਸਾਚੀ ਮਾਣੈ।...

Blessed is the death of the brave

whose dying is approved by the Lord.⁴²

They alone are acclaimed as heroes

who are honoured in the Court of God.⁴³

Hence, in Sikhism a real, active and intense longing for such a selfless heroic action, leading to selfless martyrdom, has always been there, right from the beginning. It has all along been enthusing its adherents with the flaming spirits of heroism which stands enshrined also in the following verses, for instance, contained in its own sacred scripture :

1. ਕਬੀਰ ਮੁਹਿ ਮਰਨੇ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ਹੈ,
ਮਰਉ ਤਾ ਹਰਿ ਕੈ ਦੁਆਰ।⁴⁴
I am eager to die, O God !
Pray let me die at Your door-step.⁴⁴
2. ਗਗਨ ਦਮਾਮਾ ਬਾਜਿਓ, ਪਰਿਓ ਨੀਸਾਨੈ ਘਾਉ,
ਖੇਤੁ ਜੁ ਮਾਂਡਿਓ ਸੂਰਮਾ, ਅਬ ਜੂਝਨ ਕੇ ਦਾਉ।
ਸੂਰਾ ਸੋ ਪਹਿਚਾਨੀਐ, ਜੁ ਲਰੈ ਦੀਨ ਕੇ ਹੇਤੁ,
ਪੁਰਜਾ ਪੁਰਜਾ ਕਟਿ ਮਰੈ, ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਛਾਡੈ ਖੇਤੁ।⁴⁵
The battle-drum has struck and sounded
and the weapon has hit the target.
As the hero has taken the field
now is the time to fight and strike.
He alone is a true hero who fights in defence
of the humble and does not flee the field
even though hacked limb by limb.⁴⁵

42. Also rendered as: Death is the privilege of the brave if they die a heroic death for a noble cause.

43. Guru Nanak Dev in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Vadhans, p. 580..

44. *Ibid.*, Slok no. 61, p. 1367.

45. *Ibid.*, Bhagat Kabir, Rag Maru, p. 1105.

Its Tenth Prophet-preceptor, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708 A.D.), has also stated :

1. ਅਵਰ ਬਾਸਨਾ ਨਾਂਹਿ ਪ੍ਰਭ !
ਧਰਮ-ਜੁਧ ਕੇ ਚਾਇ।⁴⁶
I cherish no other desire.
I long only for the war of righteousness.⁴⁶
2. ਧੰਨ ਜੀਓ ਤਿਹ ਕੋ ਜਗ ਮੈ,
ਮੁਖ ਤੇ ਹਰਿ, ਚਿਤ ਮੈ ਜੁਧੁ, ਬਿਚਾਰੈ।
ਦੇਹ ਅਨਿਤ ਨ ਨਿਤ ਰਹੈ,
ਜਸੁ-ਨਾਵ ਚੜੈ, ਭਵਸਾਗਰ ਤਾਰੈ।⁴⁷
Blessed be he whose tongue lauds God
and contemplates holy war in his mind.
This perishable body shall not last.
So, let him through his self-sacrifice,
sail on in the ship of glory.⁴⁷

Emphasising such an exalted concept of martyrdom and continuing with its glorious tradition, he fervently prayed to God:

ਦੇਹ ਸਿਵਾ! ਬਰੁ ਮੋਹਿ ਇਹੈ,
ਸੁਭ ਕਰਮਨੁ ਤੇ ਕਬਹੂੰ ਨ ਟਰੋਂ।
ਨ ਡਰੋਂ ਅਰਿ ਸੋਂ, ਜਬ ਜਾਇ ਲਰੋਂ,
ਨਿਸਚੇ ਕਰਿ ਅਪੁਨੀ ਜੀਤ ਕਰੋਂ।
ਅਰੁ ਸਿਖਹੋਂ ਅਪਨੇ ਹੀ ਮਨ ਕੋ,
ਇਹ ਲਾਲਚ ਹਉ ਗੁਨ ਤਉ ਉਚਰੋਂ।
ਜਬ ਆਵ ਕੀ ਅਉਧ ਨਿਦਾਨ ਬਨੈ,
ਅਤਿ ਹੀ ਰਨ ਮੈ ਤਬ ਜੂਝ ਮਰੋਂ।⁴⁸
Grant unto me this boon, O God ! that
I may never refrain from righteous deeds.
I may never have the fear of foes
when I go to fight in the battle-field.
and I may fight with confident faith in my victory.
I may ever instruct my mind in such a way that
in my heart of hearts I should always long to sing your praise.
when the span of my life reaches its limits
I may pass away fighting heroically in the battle field.

46. *Dasam Granth Sahib*, Krishan Avtar, dt. 1688 A.D., St. No. 2491, p. 798.

47. *Ibid.*, St. No. 2492, p. 798.

48. *Ibid.*, *Chandi Charittar Ukut Bilas*, St. 233.

Thus, in Sikhism an intense desire for martyrdom has all along been regarded as a boon, a privilege and a thirst.⁴⁹ The lustre and dignity, the joy and triumph as well as the exalted status associated with it has even recently been observed in deliberate self-sacrifice of Sardar Darshan Singh Pheruman (1885-1969 A.D.) and Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (d. 1984). They who suffered voluntary or self-sought death for such common, noble and holy causes, have since remained precious objects of deep concern and veneration to the entire community. So much so that glorious martyrdom in the form of holy shrines and grand memorials at the sites of their martyrdom have been raised not only of the Gurus but also of their devoted Sikhs to honour and commemorate their great martyrdoms. These have since become popular and revered places of pilgrimage and worship wherein their anniversaries are celebrated by huge gatherings with great reverence. Two such shrines commemorate, for instance, the martyrdom of Baba Deep Singh (1682-1757) in Amritsar, one of which is erected in the very precincts of Harmandir Sahib (Golden Temple) and the other in its neighbourhood and is called '*Shahidganj Baba Deep Singh Shahid*'.

The sufferings and sacrifices of such valiant men and women who were brutally tortured to death, are also reverentially remembered, their martyrdoms are recalled and honoured as under, in the daily prayer- individual as well as congregational supplication⁵⁰ ---- of the Sikhs all over the world :

ਪੰਜਾਂ ਪਿਆਰਿਆਂ, ਚੌਹਾਂ ਸਾਹਿਬਜ਼ਾਦਿਆਂ, ਚਾਲ੍ਹੀਆਂ ਮੁਕਤਿਆਂ
ਹਠੀਆਂ, ਜਪੀਆਂ, ਤਪੀਆਂ, ਸਹੀਦਾਂ, ਮੁਰੀਦਾਂ
... ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ,
ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ! ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ!
ਜਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਸਿੰਘਾਂ, ਸਿੰਘਣੀਆਂ ਨੇ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸੀਸ ਦਿਤੇ,
ਬੰਦ ਬੰਦ ਕਟਵਾਏ, ਖੋਪਰੀਆਂ ਲੁਹਾਈਆਂ, ਚਮੜੀਆਂ ਉਤਰਵਾਈਆਂ,
ਚਰਖੀਆਂ ਉਤੇ ਚਾੜ੍ਹੇ ਗਏ, ਆਰਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਚਿਰਾਏ ਗਏ,
ਗੁਰਦੁਆਰਿਆਂ ਦੀ ਸੇਵਾ-ਸੰਭਾਲ ਲਈ ਕੁਰਬਾਨੀਆਂ ਕੀਤੀਆਂ,

49. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Vadhans, p. 580.

50. Which, according to Prof. Teja Singh, "bears the stamp of all that is best and most moving in Sikhism. It is the crystallization of the Sikh nation's history. It is a living monument of its greatness which generation after generation of the Sikhs will repeat to themselves to keep alive the old fire in their midst." See *The Sikh Prayer*, Amritsar-1956, p. 9.

ਧਰਮ ਨਹੀਂ ਹਾਰਿਆ, ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕੇਸਾਂ - ਸੁਆਸਾਂ ਸੰਗ ਨਿਭਾਈ,
ਤਿਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਕਮਾਈ ਦਾ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰ ਕੇ, ਖਾਲਸਾ ਜੀ ! ਬੋਲੋ ਜੀ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ !⁵¹

The five Loved Ones, the Guru's four sons,
the Forty saved and other holy and heroic men,
saints and martyrs:
remember their selfless and heroic deeds, and say,
Vaheguru, Glory be to God !

Thinking of the heroic deeds and
sweet resignation of those men and women
who suffered tortuous persecution
and laid down their lives in the cause of faith,
Who, for instance, were beheaded,
Who suffered themselves to be cut up limb by limb;
and had their scalps scraped off⁵²
Who were shredded on the moving wheels
and were sawn or flayed alive
Who made supreme sacrifices
in the service of their holy shrines,
Yet did not utter a moan or a word of complaint,
did not falter even for a while
and remained steadfast in their Sikh faith
to the last hair of their sacred tresses
and to their last breath
Say, Vaheguru, Glory be to God !

This path-breaking concept of martyrdom and the glorious tradition evolved around it during the pontificate of Guru Nanak and his three spiritual successors, reached its climax with the death by extreme and unspeakable physical tortures of Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606 A.D.), the Fifth in his apostolic line.

His life and death fully exemplified the above religious and ethical injunctions as well as the imperatives of this ideal concept of martyrdom. During his detention in Lahore for several days, he was kept hungry and awake, made to sit on a red-hot metal plate and take a dip in boiling water. Burning sand was poured over him in the

51. As published by the Shiromani, Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar in *Nitnem Te Hore Banian*, pp. 153-54.

52. Rather than allowing the removal of even a single long hair from their head.

scorching heat of summer and his blistered body was then immersed into the running cold water of the nearby river Ravi.

Describing this heart-rending event in his report, dated 25 September 1606, from Lahore to his home-country, Father Ferdinand Guerreiro, a contemporary Jesuit missionary, tells :

The King sent for the said Guru... handed him over to a rich gentile (called Chandu)... He gave every day new torments to the Saint. He ordered to give him much torture... he took away his food, he did him thousand and one dishonours. In that way their (Sikhs') good Pope died, overwhelmed by the suffering, torments and dishonours.⁵³

But Guru Arjan bore that inhuman treatment willingly and courageously with complete poise and fortitude, resigning to the will of God thinking of Him, repeating His name and reciting hymns in His praise, as recorded by another contemporary, Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), the highly learned amanuensis of his manuscript of the Holy Book. *Guru Granth Sahib* (dt. 1604 A.D.), in his symbolic and highly meaningful poem, depicting the state of his soul thus :

ਰਹਿੰਦੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਦਰੀਆਉ ਵਿਚਿ,
ਮੀਨ ਕੁਲੀਨ ਹੇਤੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਣੀ।
ਦਰਸਨੁ ਦੇਖਿ ਪਤੰਗ ਜਿਉ,
ਜੇਤੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਜੇਤਿ ਸਮਾਣੀ।
ਸਬਦ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਲਿਵ ਮਿਰਗ ਜਿਉ,
ਭੀੜ ਪਈ ਚਿਤਿ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਆਣੀ...⁵⁴

As fishes are at one with the waves of the river,
so was Guru Arjan immersed in the River Divine.
As the moth merges itself into the flame at its sight,
so was the light of the Guru merged with the Light of God.
As the deer hears no sound
other than the music of the hunter's bell,
So he had nothing in mind except the Word of God
in the extremist hours of suffering.⁵⁴

53. Guerreiro, Father Ferdinand, *Annual Relations*, 1606-1607, Part IV, Book III, Ch. V of 138-151 (r), Lisbon-1609; reprinted in Vol. II, pp. 366-70, Coimbra-1931; Gopal Singh, Dr., *A History of the Sikh People*, New Delhi-1979; 2nd. ed. 1988, pp. 194-95; *Jahangir and the Jesuits*, translated by C.H. Payne, London - 1930, pp. 11-12.

54. Gurdas, Bhai, *Varan*, op. cit.; No. 24, St.23.

As if, Guru Arjan had anticipated all that and was fully prepared to suffer the ordeal for his convictions, as stated by himself two years earlier, while compiling *Guru Granth Sahib*, in verses such as the following :

ਸੇਵਕ ਕੀ ਓੜਕਿ ਨਿਬਹੀ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਿ;
ਜੀਵਤ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸੇਵਿਓ ਅਪਨਾ, ਚਲਤੇ ਰਾਖਿਓ ਚੀਤਿ।
ਜੈਸੀ ਆਗਿਆ ਕੀਨੀ ਠਾਕੁਰ, ਤਿਸ ਤੇ ਮੁਖੁ ਨਹੀਂ ਮੋਰਿਓ;
ਸਹਜੁ ਅਨੰਦ ਰਾਖਿਓ ਗ੍ਰਿਹ ਭੀਤਰਿ, ਉਠਿ ਉਆਹੂ ਕਉ ਦਉਰਿਓ।
ਆਗਿਆ ਮਹਿ ਭੂਖ ਸੋਈ ਕਰਿ ਸੂਖਾ, ਸੋਗ ਹਰਖ ਨਹੀਂ ਜਾਨਿਓ;
ਜੋ ਜੋ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਭਇਓ ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਕਾ, ਸੋ ਮਾਥੈ ਲੈ ਮਾਨਿਓ।⁵⁵

Love of the servant of God

has remained constant till the last.

He served Him while living

and kept only Him in mind at departure...

He never turned his face away from His command.

He always rushed to carry it out,

while maintaining his poise with joy.

While obeying His command, he felt joy even in hunger

and never discriminated between sorrow and joy.⁵⁵

He was so sure that :-

ਤਾਤੀ ਵਾਉ ਨ ਲਗਾਈ,
ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਰਣਾਈ।
ਚਉਗਿਰਦ ਹਮਾਰੈ ਰਾਮ ਕਾਰ,
ਦੁਖ ਲਗੈ ਨ ਭਾਈ।⁵⁶

As we are under the protection of God,

not a single whiff of hot air shall touch him.⁵⁶

As the protective line of God's Name is drawn around us,

no pain ever afflicts us.⁵⁶

He passed away, thus, in perfect peace of the spirit and abiding in His sweet will, on 30 May 1606 at the age of 43 years, fixing his mind on Him and repeating:

ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ,
ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਂਗੈ।⁵⁷

55 . Guru Arjan Dev in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Maru, p. 1000.

56. *Ibid.*, Rag Bilawal, p. 89.

57. *Ibid.*, Rag. Asa, p. 394.

Whatsoever be Your will and doing,
 is ever sweet to me, O God !
 I yearn only for the boon of
 devotion to Your Name.⁵⁷

Such a tortuous execution of Guru Arjan Dev was carried out according to *Taura-i-Changezi* (i.e. the Codal Book of Changez Khan) under specific orders⁵⁸ of the then Mughal Emperor, Jahangir (1569-1627), who stated as follows, in his memoirs on 19 June, 1606, just 20 days after the culmination of that most tragic event :

There lived at Gobindwal on the bank of river Beas a Hindu, named Arjan, in the garb of a *pir* and *Sheikh*. So much so that under its influence he had captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay, even of some foolish and stupid Muslims to adopt his ways and customs. He had noised himself about as a religious and worldly leader. They called him Guru, and from all sides and directions, fools and garb-worshippers were inclined towards him and reposed full faith in him.

For three or four generations, they had kept this *dukan-i-batil* (shop of falsehood or vane traffic, i.e. the Sikh faith) brisk. For a long time the thought kept coming to me of either putting an end to this traffic or bringing him into the fold of Islam...

I ordered that he be brought into my presence. I gave over his houses, dwelling places and children to Murtza Khan⁵⁹ and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he be put to death with tortures.⁶⁰

Hence, the Emperor was so alarmed at the increasing popularity and growing influence of the Guru among the Hindus and Muslims alike and the far-reaching spread of the Sikh movement⁶¹ that he was

58. Passed by him after entering Lahore on 16th May, 1606.

59. Jahangir's Mir Bakhshi.

60. Jahangir, Nur-ud-din, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Published by Nawal Kishore Press, Lucknow, p. 35; translated into English by A. Rogers and H. Beveridge, London 1909, reprint New Delhi-1989, pp. 72-73; Ganda Singh, Dr., 'The Martyrdom of Guru Arjan' in *The Panjab Past and Present*, Patiala-Vol. XII, April, 1978, p. 163.

61. As also observed in 1645 by a contemporary Muslim chronicler, Zulfikar Ardistani, known as Mohsin Fani, "During the time of each Guru, the Sikhs increased till in the
 (Cont...)

given the choice of accepting Islam or facing painful death with tortures (*yasa* and *siyasat*). The Guru spurning it, preferred to submit to the will of God and suffer death for the sake of religious belief and freedom of conscience, while vindicating the cause of truth and upholding human rights rather than yielding to the will of the newly crowned bigoted ruler⁶², instigated in the name of Islam and danger to the political stability of the empire, by Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1569-1624) who titled himself as *Imam-i-Rabbani* and Guru Arjan as *Imam-i-Kufar*. It was he again who then congratulated Murtza Khan, the said Mir Bakhshi of Jahangir, and expressed his jubilation in the following words :

The execution of the accursed *kafir* of Goindwal at this time is a very good achievement, indeed, and has become the cause of a great defeat of the hateful Hindus. With whatever intention they are killed and with whatever objective they are destroyed, it is a meritorious act for the Muslims.

Before the *kafir* was killed, I had seen in a dream that the Emperor of the day had destroyed the crown of the head of *Shirk* (infidelity). It is true that this infidel was the chief of the infidels and a leader of the *Kafirs*.⁶³

Guru Arjan, on the other hand, resolutely and boldly faced horrible persecution fulfilling the aforesaid ideal of Guru Nanak and setting thereby an example to the rest of the world as to how a man of God should mock death, and declaring at the same time :

ਨ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ, ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ,
ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ।⁶⁴

None is our enemy,
Nor is anyone stranger to us.

We are in cordial accord with one and all.⁶⁴

(Cont...)

reign of Guru Arjan they became numerous and there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found". (*Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, dt. 1645 A.D., Nawal Kishore Press, ed., Kanpur-1904, p. 234).

62. Smith, V.A., *Akbar*, Oxford-1926, p. 322; Sharma, Prin. S.B., *Religious Policy of the Mughal Emperors*, New York-1962, p. 71.

63. In his letter published in the *Maktubat-i-Imam-i-Rabbani Hazrat Mujaddid Alf-i-Sani*, Vol. I, pt. III, letter no. 193, pp. 95-96; Ganda Singh, Dr., *Guru Arjan's Martyrdom*, pp. 36-37.

64. *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Kanra, p. 1299.

His execution, instead of leading to the desired extermination of the Sikh religion, proved, according to Syed Muhammad Latif, "a great turning point in the history of the Sikh nation."⁶⁵ It led to far-reaching consequences, set the phenomenon of martyrdom in its course and went a long way in transforming the character of the Sikh movement and giving rise to a glorious saga of untold sufferings and unprecedented sacrifices for safeguarding the faith and defending the basic human rights, proclaiming:

ਹੁਣਿ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਹੋਆ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ,
ਪੈ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਕਿਸੇ ਰਵਾਣ ਦਾ;
ਸਭ ਸੁਖਾਲੀ ਵੁਢੀਆ,
ਇਹੁ ਹੋਆ ਹਲੇਮੀ ਰਾਜੁ ਜੀਉ।
ਮੀਨ ਕੁਲੀਨ ਹੇਤੁ ਨਿਰਬਾਣੀ।⁶⁶

The gracious Lord has now

promulgated His Ordinances:

"None shall domineer over others

or cause pain to them.

All shall abide in peace and joy

as the governance shall be gentle and compassionate.⁶⁶

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev was followed by the unique martyrdom of his own grandson and the Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675 A.D.), who too laid down his life in 1675 at Delhi under the specific orders of Jahangir's grandson, Emperor Aurangzeb (1616-1707 A.D.),⁶⁷ "whose efforts", according to Syed Muhammad Latif, "were directed to converting the whole world to the Mahomedan faith" and who unsuccessfully "urged the Sikh Guru to embrace Mahomedanism."⁶⁸ The Guru laid down his life so valorously at the altar of *Dharma* for raising a forceful voice against the Emperor's religious fanaticism, communal bigotry, persecutory zeal, repressive

65. Latif, K.B. Syed Muhammed, *History of the Punjab, from the Remotest Antiquity to the Present Time*, dt. Jhang-1889; Calcutta-1891, p. 254.

66. Guru Arjan Dev in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Sri, p. 74.

67. According to a contemporary account written within twenty-two years of the momentous event, "Guru Tegh Bahadur having been kept a prisoner... was executed under the orders of the Emperor Alamgir in 1086 al-Hijri, 11 November 1675". (Bhandari, Munshi Sujana Rai, *Khulasat-ut-Tawarikh*, completed in 1697 A.D., p. 70).

68. Latif, *History of the Punjab*, p. 260; Edwards, S.M. & Garrette, H.L.O., *The Mughal Rule in India*, London-1930; Delhi-1956, p. 114.

policies and tyrannical measures, adopted on a comprehensive scale to annihilate all traces of diversity among various culture-groups and eliminate Hinduism altogether⁶⁹ in a deliberate effort to change thereby the entire face of the sub-continent into a Muslim State.

Guru Tegh Bahadur himself volunteered to sacrifice his life in order to defend the fundamental rights of the people, to protect their faith and belief and to vindicate, by his heroic and altruistic action, the freedom of faith, conscience and worship which were being denied to them. He embodied in himself the undaunted spirit of supreme sacrifice in the pursuit of such lofty ideals and eternal values by which humanity must always live, described as under by Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), the illustrious founder of the *Khalsa* :

ਤਿਲਕ ਜੰਝੂ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤਾਕਾ, ਕੀਨੋ ਬਡੋ ਕਲੂ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ।
ਸਾਧਨ ਹੇਤਿ, ਇਤਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰੀ, ਸੀਸ ਦੀਯਾ ਪਰ ਸੀ ਨ ਉਚਰੀ।
ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸਾਕਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਆ, ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ ਪਰੁ ਸਿਰਰੁ ਨਾ ਦੀਆ ।...
ਠੀਕਰ ਫੇਰਿ, ਦਿਲੀਸ ਸਿਰਿ, ਪ੍ਰਭਪੁਰ ਕੀਯਾ ਧਯਾਨ।
ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ, ਕਰੀ ਨਾ ਕਿਨਹੂੰ ਆਨਿ।

The Divine Master (i.e. Guru Tegh Bahadur)
protected their⁷⁰ religious right to apply frontal
caste-marks and wear sacred threads.⁷¹

He performed thereby
a great feat in this age of darkness.

He went to the utmost limit⁷²
for the sake of the men of faith.

He gave away his head
without uttering even the whisper of a groan.

He endured this unique martyrdom
for the cause of Truth and protection of Faith.

He readily offered his head for sacrifice
but did not give up his ideal and conviction...⁷³

69. See *Akhbarat*, 13th year, sheet 17, as rendered into English and published by Dr. Sir J.N. Sarkar in his *History of Aurangzeb*, Vol. III, Calcutta-1928, p. 283; see also Khushwaqt Rai, Munshi, *Tawarikh-i-Sikhan* (dated 1811 A.D.), Manuscript preserved in the Punjab State Archives at Patiala, ff 24-26; Edwards and Garrette, *The Mughal Rule in India*, p. 114.

70. That is, of the Hindus.

71. That is, their religious sacraments.

72. That is, made such a unique and supreme sacrifice.

73. In the freedom of conscience and worship for everybody.

Breaking the pot-sherd of his body
 on the head of the monarch of Delhi,⁷⁴
 he departed for the Abode of God.

No one has ever performed
 a deed as noble and great as Tegh Bahadur.⁷⁵

Guru Tegh Bahadur's only son, Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, his four princely grandsons, five beloveds, forty liberated souls and thousands other noble, devoted and steadfast men and women followed the trail blazed by Guru Arjan Dev's great and matchless martyrdom. In the face of unspeakable sufferings and supreme sacrifices, they kept their faith unsullied and the Sikh spirit undefiled under the most trying circumstances, praying and singing in chorus :

ਜਾਨ ਜਾਏ ਤਾਂ ਜਾਏ,
 ਮੇਰਾ ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਦਕ ਨਾ ਜਾਏ।

Let my life go, let my body perish
 But let not, my faith shake or shatter.⁷⁶

If this is correct that the 'martyrs of a religion usually arise from persecution' and that 'the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church', Sikhism and its tradition of martyrdom is a superior and standard example of this unique phenomenon of human nature. Hence, says Dr. Geden, "Perhaps the most striking example in India of the effect of a cruel persecution in consolidating and defining the religious life of country is that of the Sikhs... who found themselves brought into conflict with the dominant power of the Mughal emperors and were forced, in self-defence, to take up arms and maintain their existence and religious liberty... They were confronted with the alternative of acceptance of the formula and creed of the ruling faith or destruction. They refused to submit to either, but endeavoured rather to maintain their freedom and rights with the sword. The persecution which ensued had the effect of welding a community and organisation, in its origin purely religious, into a militant order and nation of soldiers, tenuous of military might and norms no less than of creed and faith."⁷⁷

74. That is, his contemporary Mughal Emperor, M.M. Alamgir Aurangzeb.

75. Guru Gobind Singh in *Dasam Granth Sahib*, p.70, *Bachittar Natak*, Anandpur Sahib-1698 ch. 4, sts. 13-15.

76. A very popular adage usually sung in chorus by the Sikhs while preparing or heading for a *morcha* or movement.

77. Geden, A.S., in Vol. IX of *The Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, p. 764.

Thus the martyrdoms of Guru Arjan Dev (in 1606 A.D.), Guru Tegh Bahadur (in 1675 A.D.), Guru Gobind Singh's four princely sons (in 1705 A.D.) and his own life-long struggle and martyrdom (in 1708 A.D.) as well as those of their hundreds of thousand dedicated disciples, ever since, have made a lasting imprint on the Sikh concept, doctrine, object and ideal of martyrdom and have also set such examples for mankind, in general, and Indians, in particular, which are unparalleled in the religious, ethical and social chronicles of the world.

UNDERSTANDING EARLY SIKH IDEA OF MARTYRDOM

*Dr Nazer Singh**

‘What is the relation of man to the Supreme’? Ernest Trumpp dealt with this question in his not so popular a translation of some *Ragas* of the *Adi Granth*.¹ Trumpp was, it needs to be noticed, looking for a ‘science’ of Sikhism. His question was about the position of Guru Nanak viz-a-viz God as well as his own followers, the Sikhs. It had a direct bearing for the image and self-image of the Sikh community as well.²

Trumpp found that the ‘*Old Janam-Sakhi*’ said that “Nanak was called to the threshold of God and solemnly installed as Guru.”³ No ‘proof’ of his Divinity was, however, given by Guru Nanak in the *Granth Sahib*, pointed out Trumpp.⁴ Yet the translator recorded how the idea that Nanak was the ‘true Guru’ had been an open secret of Sikh philosophy and practice. Trumpp was quick to add that the successors of Guru Nanak took this idea as ‘self evident’.⁵ Guruship in fact did away the necessity for Guru Nanak to give, and for his successors and their followers to ask for, ‘the proof’ of Nanak's oneness with the Supreme Lord.⁶ In support of his version Trumpp quoted the first⁷ and the fifth Gurus. Guru Arjan declared that the Guru “is the very fullness of Hari himself.”⁸

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1. Dr. Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth* (Munshiram Manoharlal : 1977) cviii.

2. Trumpp was aware of the issue of Sikh identity but did not realize its significance for his own work as well as for the relationship between the Sikhs and the British Empire—Nazer Singh.

3. Trumpp, *op. cit.*

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. “It is everywhere presupposed as self/evident that he is true Guru, and he never takes the slightest pain to prove it. The following Gurus in their turn appeal to Nanak that he had instituted a successive initiation into the Guruship, and dispense therefore with every proof”, wrote Trumpp, See, *op. cit.*

7. Trumpp, *Ibid.*, note: 04.

8. *Ibid.*, cviii.

If 'proof' or 'witness' are essentials of the idea of martyrdom as the Christian and Islamic tradition do claim⁹ then Sikh theology is relatively more open to the martyrs. Because every Sikh inspired by the Guru and ready to sacrifice himself for his faith is qualified to become a martyr. Martyrdom for a Sikh is an opportunity to demonstrate his divine status. But this chance is seized by him. Moreover, this opportunity comes to him because he, as a Sikh, has already chosen a path of self-denial by living in accordance with God's *hukam* for others.

A recent study on the genesis and role of martyrdom in Sikhism had stressed the significance of certain historical events for the popularization of martyrdom as an idea.¹⁰ We are told that the Sikhs adopted the word *Shahid* from the multi-religious/cultural and linguistic environment of north-India produced by Islam's encounter with the local folk traditions. For example, *Shahid* in the *bani* of Guru Nanak referred either to the popular Muslim martyrs or 'the benign and malevolent beings'¹¹ whose beneficial and curative powers were sought out by the people cutting across the religious boundaries. By this way, this study denied an originality to the Sikh concept of martyrdom by refusing to ground it in the theology begun by Guru Nanak. But this was not the only way to do it. Another way was to situate it in Sikh politics and historiography since the 18th century, especially during the colonial phase (1872-1925).

We are referring to Louis Fenech and his thesis. He noticed that Sikh scholars under the influence of Singh Sabha used the 'histories' of the martyrs to proclaim and establish the uniqueness of Sikh thought and social order to make it separate from the Hindus.¹² Doing so the Sikh scholarship had yoked the idea of martyrdom to the ideal of Sikh identity. In this process, there emerged not only a 'Rhetoric of Martyrdom'¹³ but also the martyrological interpretation of Sikh history. Further, the idea of martyrdom was reshaped : it became exclusively Sikh in the religious or theological sense. Moreover, the Singh Sabha's interpretation of Sikh history made martyrdom and identity consubstantial for the modern Sikhs by giving these two concepts a

9. Louis E. Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition* (Oxford : 2000), p. 03.

10. *Ibid. passim*.

11. Louis E. Fenech, *op. cit.*, p. 04.

12. See, Louis E. Fenech, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-6, 18-19, 189-213, 228-229.

13. *Ibid.*, pp. 15-18.

monogenesis¹⁴ through a particular construction of the past.

The monogenesis of identity and martyrdom was, we are told, traced to the *Nānak bani* by interpreting the Holy scriptures in terms of 'the liberation theology'.¹⁵ Consequently, we had an interpretation that was extremely ideological, consciously designed and successfully executed as if a (political) strategy. It produced a philosophy and method of Sikh history popularized by the Sikh publicist, through journalism and Sikh education systems.¹⁶ Centred on the rhetoric of martyrdom, it performed certain (political) functions. It had social consequences as well.

Through this rhetoric, continued Fenech, Sikhs (non-Sikhs) were finally persuaded to see themselves as a community distinct from all others, a community known above all else for its ability to 'sacrifice for the sake of righteousness'.¹⁷ The rhetoric of martyrdom was, thus, also a technique of transcendence having the soteriological as well as sociological import. Soteriologically, the motif of *Kurbani* helped to bring the Sikhs closer to *Akal Purakh*.¹⁸ Sociologically, it aided in the creation of 'a sacred community' whose members were raised above the members of all others.¹⁹

When did soteriology enter the Sikh thought? Fenech did not face this question. But he presented it as if it became operative in Sikh life and history in the modern times. We know the Sikh thought was marked by soteriological shade by its very origin.²⁰ *Majh Kee Var* of Guru Nanak says that its author was 'accepted' by God and given the *nam* to preach and practise it. The idea is again stressed in the *Adi Sakhian*, "God was Nanak; Nanak, God", reads the *Adi Sakhian*.

14. See, Fenech, Chapter Three.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-72.

16. See, Louis E. Fenech, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-213.

17. *Ibid.*, p.228.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 228-29.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 229.

20. The genesis and role of Sikh Soteriology has been summed up by S.S. Hans, "The purpose of the *Janamsakhi* narrators was to set forth a soteriological interpretation of the life of Guru Nanak. This interpretation... expressed in anecdote, in discourse, and in an occasional declaration of faith. A part of the intention was evidently the conversion of others to the same interpretation; an even greater part was obviously the confirming and strengthening of the faithful." See, W.H.McLeod, *Early Sikh Tradition : A Study of the Janam-Sakhis*, (Oxford, 1980), p. 293. S.S. Hans 'reviewed' this work of McLeod in *Journal of Regional History*, Vol. I, 1980, p. 184.

As for the idea of 'a sacred community' or the divinity of the Sikhs is concerned, it was inbuilt in the Sikh concept of Guru.²¹ Historically, its clear manifestation was the doctrine of *Guru Granth* and *Guru Panth*. Theologically, Guru Nanak adopted Lehna as his 'Guru'. Was not *Sangat* 'a sacred community'? Is not *Sangat* as old as the *sabd* and *sakhi*? Fenech had missed this aspect of Sikh history and philosophy.

The Sikh notion of 'a sacred community' was well developed by Guru Arjan's time. In his *Rag Majh*, he raised many questions and answered them. Two of the questions were : "Who is free (liberated), who is bound?" "Who is endowed with (divine) knowledge, who is the teacher (of it)?"²² His answer was :

"The disciple is free, the disciple is bound (to Hari)

"The disciple is endowed with (divine) knowledge,
the disciple is teaching.

"The disciple, as householder (or) living lonely, is blessed,
the disciple attains (his i.e. Hari's) value, Sir !"²³

A prominent feature of Guru Arjan's verse is the glorification of the *sadh-sang*. 'The society of the pious' is the Lord's asylum.²⁴ This is an 'asylum' where one could drink the nectar-name (*amrit-nam*). And the nectar is both Guru's word and his sight. The sight (*darsan*) works wonders. *Rag Gauri* reads:²⁵

"The dry ones are made green in a moment.

"Having got sight of the nectar they are vivified" "Pause"

"The afflictions are cut-off by the perfect guru, the God."

"On his worshippers his own worship is bestowed."

The Guru is worship. His 'company' is a place of worship and an assembly for worship.

Another merit of 'the society of the pious' is that it enables one to adore the Lord fearlessly.²⁶ Guru Arjan and his Sikhs were in God's 'sanctuary'.²⁷ The worshipable Sikhs (*sadhs*) were praised by Guru

21. Since Guru Nanak's Mission had a Divine sanction behind it so it was natural for his following to imagine itself as 'sacred'.

22. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*, p. 271.

25. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 289.

27. *Ibid.*

Arjan in the following words :

"I am a sacrifice to him, whose support the name alone is.

(1) "How great shall be counted the grandeur of those men,
who are imbued with love to the supreme Brahm?

(2) "Happiness, tranquility and joy are with them,
no other donor is equal to them."²⁸

The 'saints' (Guru's Sikhs) are donors to a mission. They "are come to rescue the world".²⁹ In fact, they are the *parupkaries*.³⁰ He who thirst for their 'sight' or falls on their 'asylum' is saved.³¹ They are the society of saints that fulfills his desire.

Gauri guareri of the fifth Guru takes the *nam* as 'treasury'.³² *Sabd* in *Rag Gauri* reiterates it. There is something autobiographical in *Gauri guareri*. *Bani* of the 3rd and the 4th Gurus proved for Guru Arjan as a big spiritual and social capital. *Guareri* says :

"We are rich and opulent by the true name.

"We sing the praises of Hari with natural ease."

(1) "When I opened and saw the treasury of (my) father
and grand father :

"Then the treasure was put into my heart."

(2) "With gems and rubies,
the value of which cannot be estimated.

(My) store-rooms are filled,
they are inexhaustable and cannot be weighed."³³

Here is an echo of the making of Sikh Scripture. It needs to be recalled that the *Adi Granth* was called *Darbar Sahib*. With Guru Arjan Amritsar entered Sikh History.

Sangat is commanded to join the feast of 'the word'.³⁴ The feast is the source of devotion. It is a witness to the devotee's raised or high status. He is an authorized person or authority doing the *nam*. *Gauri guareri* concludes :

28. *Ibid.*, pp.297-98.

29. *Ibid.*, p.298.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p. 299.

32. *Ibid.*, p.262.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Ibid.*

"Having met together, O brother,
 let us eat and spend (the treasures)"
 "They do not become diminished, they are (rather) increased."
 Nanak says :

on whose forehead he causes (this) decree to be written:
 "Him he applies to this treasury."³⁵

In Guru Arjan's verse a devotee or the practitioner of *nam* is both the Lord and the Servant. Love makes the two inseparable from each other. It is power of the love / service that "the Lord is in subserviency to his servant."³⁶ It is by the order of the Lord that the servant is put into his service. The servant's enrolment happened "after his fetter is cut off."³⁷ He "does that, which pleases to the Lord, within (in his heart) he is a servant, outwardly he is a Lord, O ! dear."³⁸

The 'lord-servant' has another characteristic. He is governed from within.³⁹ *Sukhmani* says :

"His (God's) sight is fruitful; beautiful is the form of Hari."
 "Blessed is (his) service, approved of (his) servant."
 "The inward governor, the primeval divine male,"
 "In whose heart he dwells, he becomes exalted."
 "Death does not come near him."⁴⁰

There is a hymn on determination that leads to *Raj Yog*. In *Rag Asa*, Guru Arjan says :

"I am firm, firm in (my) mind."
 "Forest and house are the same (to me)."
 "Within (me) is (my) one beloved."
 "Outside I view (him) as many."
 "I practise the Raja Yoga."
 "In the world I am not of the world, O friend, says Nanak."⁴¹

The mind of the dedicated disciple has many more qualities. Without using the term 'Raj Yog', Guru Nanak described it in detail. *Rag Asa, Mah I, Astpadi X*, reads :

35. Trumpp, *op.cit.*, p.262.

36. *Ibid.*, p.141.

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, p.420.

40. *Ibid.*

41. Trumpp, *op. cit.*, p.573.

“The disciple mutters the name (his) mind is beautiful.

“The mind (of the disciple) is indifferent to the world
and abandoning egoism.

“This mind (of the disciple) is a King, a hero in battle.”

“This mind (of the disciple) is fearless by the name”

“By the disciple other affections and tastes are abandoned”

“This mind of the disciple is intent on devotion”

“Having known himself he becomes formless.”⁴²

Heroism, militancy or kingship are thus rooted in devotion, contemplation and determination of the disciple. In fact, the discipleship is made up of these merits. In *Asa, Mahala V, Chant; Ghar iv*, such a mind or mental state is represented by ‘*Majith* colour’.⁴³ The same *chant* refers to the ‘liberated whilst in the body’ (*Jivan Mukta*).⁴⁴ Key to liberation is ‘love’ or *bhakti*. This love relationship expresses itself by the following metaphors employed by Guru Arjan in *Asa, Chant, Ghar iv*:⁴⁵

1. “As the fish is enamoured with the water, so is Nanak intoxicated with Hari.”
2. “As the *Chatrik* asks for a drop (of rain), so Hari is dear (to) Nanak”.
The list of the metaphors in *Asa, Chant, Ghar, viii* adds the following to the above two :
3. “The black bee is humming about, the black bee is humming about.
Oh ! it is intoxicated with the scent of the nectar-juice of the flowers, Oh ! it is binding itself by (its) love to the lotus.”
4. “It faces the arrow, it faces the arrow, Oh ! the deer offers up heart, body and life, Oh ! it is pierced easily while listening (to the melodious sound of the hunter's bell).⁴⁶

The metaphors of fish and water, *Chatrik* and the rain-water, moth and the candel, black-bee and the flower, and the deer and

42. *Ibid.*, p.583.

43. *Ibid.*, p.625.

44. *Ibid.*

45. Trump, *op.cit.*, p.625

46. *Ibid.*, p.634.

hunter's bell were used by Bhai Gurdas also.⁴⁷ The scholars show that he did so by his *Var* 24:23 and maintains that in this *Var* the Bhai refers to the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and its significance.⁴⁸ For the few of them this portion of the *Var* presents the salients of the fifth Guru's life towards its end.

From a recent work, Bhai Gurdas, in fact, emerges as "a window to look into Guru Arjan's life and his contemporary environment, in which the Sikh movement grew rapidly."⁴⁹ At the same time we are told that the Bhai through his *Var* 24:23 inscribed primarily "the last will of the Guru..."⁵⁰ His focus was not "on the circumstances that were responsible for his arrest by the Mughal authorities."⁵¹

Was there anything like the last will of the Guru? What was this will? The *Var* 24:23 refers to the Guru's speech. Bhai Gurdas wrote that, "Like the yearning cry of a rain-bird (*babiha*), he spoke to his disciples that the Guru's teachings should never be forsaken. The blissful state of equanimity (*Sahj Samadhi*) can be attained only in the delight of spiritual love (*piram rasu*), in the company of the holy, through the teachings of the Guru."⁵² Pashaura Singh presents this *babiha*-like speech as Guru Arjan's "parting message to his disciples..."⁵³

How does the *Asa Chant* of the fifth Guru use the metaphor of rain-bird? *Chant* says, "As the *Chatrik* asks for a drop (of rain) so Hari is dear (to) Nanak."⁵⁴ The drop of water, goes the verse, has pacified the heat of the body.⁵⁵ *Chant* records that the meeting of the bird (Guru/disciple) with rain-water (*God/nam*) has, in fact, changed the very existence of the two in the meeting.⁵⁶ *Asa Chant*, glorifies contemplation and records the psychological power of the *nam* including its cooling effect and regenerating quality.

Bhai Gurdas interpreted *Asa, Chant* to make it explain the

47. See, Pashaura Singh, *Life and Works of Guru Arjan* (Oxford: 2006), p. 40.

48. Louis E.Fenech, *op.cit.*, pp. 137-38, note II.

49. Pashaura Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

50. *Ibid.*, p.40.

51. *Ibid.*

52. Quoted in Pashaura Singh, *op. cit.*, p.40.

53. Pashaura Singh, *op. cit.*, p.41.

54. See, Trumpp, *op. cit.*, pp. 625, 634.

55. *Ibid.*, p. 634.

56. *Ibid.*, note 03.

significance - the significance as he saw it himself - of the Guru's death for the Sikhs and their discipline. At his hands the meaning of the metaphors expands : it enlarges from a disciple's love to the wisdom and restraint of a disciplinarian. Speaking in the language of Guru Arjan, Bhai Gurdas suggests a definite pattern of behaviour to be observed by the Sikhs after May 1606. The suggested 'code' is based on devotion and dedication to 'spiritual love' personified by the (fifth) Guru. It aims at showing the way to attain 'the blissful state of equanimity'.⁵⁷ This bliss was achievable "in the company of the holy, through the teachings of the Guru."⁵⁸ In short, Bhai Gurdas used the death of Guru Arjan to glorify the idea of fidelity to the Guru, to highlight the relevance of *Sadh-Sang* and to reinforce the message of the Gurus. It was achieved by changing the context of the metaphors. Be as it may, Bhai Gurdas idealized the life and death of Guru Arjan into martyrdom by presenting them "as those of a hero's."⁵⁹ Had not Guru Nanak described a dedicated disciple as 'the hero in battle'? Guru Arjan Dev himself has written :

"When water and milk are placed over a fire, the water alloweth not the milk to burn ; O men in that way love God."

"As the bumble-bee becometh entangled and intoxicated by the odour of the lotus, the leaveth it not even for a moment."

"So relax not a we thy love for God; dedicate to Him all thine ornaments and enjoyments."

"Man in the company of saints hath no fear of what is called the way of death where wailings are heard."⁶⁰

57. Bhai Gurdas quoted in Pashaura Singh, *op. cit.*, p.40.

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*, p.41.

60. Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. III and IV (rpt.) (Satvik Books, 2000), p. 318.

IMAGE OF GURU ARJAN DEV IN WESTERN HISTORICAL WRITINGS

Dr K.S. Bajwa *

For any meaningful interpretation and appreciation of the life and achievements of Guru Arjan Dev as perceived by the Europeans, it is pertinent to know their writings in totality rather than their isolated observations, as has been done by many historians of the Punjab in general and of the Sikhs in particular, for a number of reasons. However, Father Jerome Xavier, a Jesuit,¹ writing from Lahore nearly four months after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev observed, when the Prince (Khusro) came flying from Agra, he passed where a gentile called (Goru) Guru, who amongst the gentiles is like a Pope amongst us. He was held a saint and was as such venerated; because of this reputation of his and because of his high dignity, the Prince went to see him, desiring, as it seems, some good prophecy. He gave him the good news of his new reign, and gave him a *tikka* (otria) on his forehead; although this man (the Guru) was a gentile and the Prince, a Moor; to the pontiff it seemed that it would be good to give this symbol peculiar to gentiles, as a sign of success in his undertaking; as the Prince was the son of a gentile woman and because of the Prince's opinion of his saintliness."

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1. Father Jerome Xavier wrote a letter in Portuguese on September 25, 1606 from Lahore to his provincial superior at Goa. The substance of it was reproduced by Father Fernao Guerreiro, S.J., in his *Relacao Annual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Compenhia de Jesus nas Partes da India Oriental*, Printed at Lisbon in Portugal in 1609 (New edition, 3 Vols., Coimbra-Lisbon, 1930-42); An English translation of the relevant portion of this letter is given by Mr. John A. D'Silva in his article : "The Rebellion of Prince Khusro, according to Jesuit sources", Published in the *Journal of Indian History*, Vol. V.1927, p. 278; also in C.H. Payne's *Jahangir and the Jesuits* (The Broadway Travellers Series) pp. 11-12 ; Ganda Singh, (ed.), *Early European Accounts of the Sikhs*, Indian Studies Past and Present, Calcutta, 1962, pp. 45, 48-49; See also; Amandeep Singh Madra & Paramjit Singh (eds.) *Sicques, Tigers or Thieves*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2004, p.3.

'The King (Jahangir) came to know of this and after having imprisoned the Prince, he ordered for the said Guru (Goru) to be brought. Having him imprisoned, some gentiles interceded for their saint ; finally they managed to get him sentenced to a hundred thousand cruzados, a petition of a rich gentile who remained his guarantor. This individual took care that either the king (El-Rei) annul this sentence or the saint have or at least negotiate that money; but in all he got frustrated; and he seized from his poor Pope everything he could find not sparing his clothes nor the clothes of his wife and sons; and seeing that all of this was not enough, as the gentiles do not have loyalty towards neither Pope or father regarding money, each and everyday he gave new affronts to the poor saint. He ordered him to be beaten many times with shoes on his face and forbade him to eat, so that he (the Guru) would give him more money, as he was not willing to believe that he did not have it, but he did not have it nor did he find anyone, who would give it to him; and thus amongst many trials, pains and torments given by the ones who ordered him, the poor Guru (Goru) died. The guarantor tried to save himself, but he was imprisoned and killed after they have taken everything they could find.'²

Inspite of being brief, this letter is very significant as it denotes many things relating to Guru's position among the contemporary Sikhs as well as non-Sikh world. Besides, it indicate the alleged cause and mode of Guru's martyrdom. For instance, it asserts Guru's association with the rebel Prince, Khusro. It signifies that the Guru was not tortured to death by the Mughals, as is emphasized in Sikh tradition but was murdered by a "gentile" who stood credit for the Guru's fine of 100,000 cruzados. This is, however, contradictory to Jahangir's own assertion in his *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, that refer to a clear order to be 'put to death with tortures.'³ Xavier's claim that this 'gentile' murdered the Guru after the surety could not be returned to him, is in part corroborated by the other contemporary account, namely, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, which quiet clearly mentions the method of torture as being inflicted by the collectors' and hastening the eventful demise of the Guru.⁴ However,

2. Amandeep Singh and Paramjit Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 7; Ganda Singh, *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

3. Ganda Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 46.

4. When after the capture of (Prince) Khusrau, His Majesty King Jannat Makani Nuruddin Muhammad Jahangir punished and mulcted Guru Arjan Mal, on account of

(Cont...)

Father Xavier's comments that Guru Arjan Dev was the equivalent of the Pope deserve an exceptional attention. The use of such a strong and unusual comparison from a European shows how important the influence of the Guru was. During the life time of Guru Arjan Sikhism's influence was not just restricted to the Punjab but extended to all parts of Northern India.⁵ Many *Udasi* and *Nirmala* establishments throughout Northern India are clear proof of that influence. In fact, it seems that Sikhism, at this point of Sikh history had much more influence than most official historiographies, Indian or Western, would let us believe.⁶

A.L.H. Polier writing about the Sikhs in 1780 did not even mention the name of Guru Arjan.⁷ Charles Wilkin, who visited Takhat Patna Sahib in 1781, does refer to the Sikh scripture, the compilation of which he attributes to Guru Nanak Dev. But he too have not mentioned even the name of Guru Arjan.⁸ James Brown writing in 1788 observed that 'Gooroo Arjan who wrote the *Gurhnt* (Granth), now generally followed as the rule of discipline'.⁹

Writing in 1790, George Forster observed that Guru Arjan succeeded his father Guru Ram Das in 1581. "He incurred the displeasure of a Hindoo (named Chaundoo) favoured by Jahangir, was committed by that Prince to the persecution of his enemy; and his death which happened in the year 1606 at Lahore, was caused, it is said, by

(Cont...)

his having prayed for the welfare of Prince Khusrav, the son of His Majesty Jannat Makani, who had rebelled against his father and a large amount was demanded from him (Guru Arjan), he found himself powerless to pay it. He was tied up and kept (in the open) in the desert around Lahore. He gave up his life there, owing to the strong sun, summer heat and injuries inflicted by the collectors' ; Irfan Habib (trans.), "Sikhism and the Sikhs 1645-46 : From 'Mobad', *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*", in *Sikh History from Persian Sources* (eds. J.S. Grewal & Irfan Habib, Tulika, New Delhi, 2001, p. 67).

5. Author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* states that in every *mahal* (each Guru's reign) the Sikhs increased in numbers, till the reign of Guru Arjan Mal, they became very numerous, not many cities remained in the inhabited region where the Sikhs had not settled in some number. Irfan Habib, *Ibid.*, p.66.
6. Amandeep Singh and Paramjit Singh, *Ibid.*, p.6.
7. A.L.H. Polier, "The Siques", Ganda Singh, *Ibid.*, pp. 55-64.
8. Charles Wilkins, "The Seekers and their College at Patna," Ganda Singh, *Ibid.*, pp. 71-75.
9. Major James Browne, "History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks," Ganda Singh, *Ibid.*, p. 22.

the rigour of confinement.”¹⁰ Thus, Forster attributes the martyrdom of Sri Guru Arjan Dev to the enmity of Chandu Shah, who was favoured by Jahangir. But he does not mention the cause of the enmity and the reason of his being favourite of the Emperor. However, the Guru died due to ‘the rigours of confinement’.

John Malcolm holds that the most significant achievement of Guru Arjan Dev during his life time was the compilation of ‘the *Adi Granth* or the first sacred volume of the Sikhs’. No doubt, beginning in this direction had been made by Guru Nanak, for ‘it was partly composed by Nanak and his immediate successors, but received its present form and arrangement from Arjunmal, who blended his own additions with what he deemed most valuable in the compositions of his predecessors’. Furthermore, ‘it is Arjan, then, who ought, from this act, to be deemed the first who gave consistent form and order to the religion of the Sikhs.’ This act of his went a long way in uniting the Sikh ‘nation more closely and increasing their numbers’. However, it ‘proved fatal’ to him. For, says Malcolm, the ‘jealousy of the Mahommedan government was excited, and he was made its sacrifice’. The mode of his death, which happened in the year of Christ 1606 and of *Samvat* 1663, is related very differently by different authors, but several of the most respectable agree in stating, that his martyrdom, for such they term it, was caused by the active hatred of a rival Hindu zealot, Dunichand Cshatriya, whose writings he refused to admit into the *Adi-Granth*, on the ground that the tenets inculcated in them were irreconcilable to the pure doctrine of the unity and omnipotence of God, thought in that sacred volume.’ This man, according to Malcolm, ‘had a sufficient influence with the Mohammedan governor of the province to procure the imprisonment of Arjan: who is affirmed, by some writers, to have died from the severity of his confinement, and by others to have been put to death in the most cruel manner. In whatever way his life was terminated, there can be no doubt from its consequences, that it was, considered by his followers, as an atrocious murder, committed by the Mohammedan government; and the Sikhs who had been, till then,

10. George Forster, “*Journey from Bengal to England, Through the Northern Parts of India, Kashmir, Afghanistan and Persia and into Russia by the Caspian Sea*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala 1970 (first Published in 1798, London, 2 Vols.) Vol. I, pp. 297-98.

an inoffensive, peaceable sect took arms under Hargovind, the son of Arjunmal, and wrecked their vengeance upon all who they thought concerned in the death of their revered priest.'¹¹

However, for Malcolm, the most significant achievement of Guru Arjan was the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. Also, it became the root cause of his martyrdom, for it (*Adi Granth*) 'provided consistent form and order' to Sikhism which helped in increasing the number of Guru's followers and uniting the Sikh 'nation more closely' than ever before. But the instigator to the Mughal authorities as well as the reason for instigation is quiet novel and does not find support in Sikh history and tradition.¹² Nevertheless, 'an atrocious murder' of the Guru with the order of the Mughal Emperor went a long way in changing the character of the Sikh movement as the Sikhs took up arms under Guru Hargobind Sahib to defend their faith. This in turn caused estrangement in Mughal-Sikh relations.

W.L.M. Gregor asserts that Guru Arjan was the favourite son of his father. He became famous for the compilation of *Adi Granth* which he placed in the temple named 'Harmunder or God's House' erected by him in a large tank. Large number of devotees started visiting Ramdaspur (Amritsar) frequently 'for the purpose of bathing and hearing the *Grunth* read'. Amongst his followers, many were 'Zamindars'. Not only the Sikh devotees but also the 'Hindu merchants flocked to the Punjab in the time of Arjun, bringing all kinds of curiosities for sale'. With the increased commercial activities and the number of devotees, the town of Ramdaspur expanded. Resultantly, Guru's wealth began to increase which considerably effected his life style and caused envy to his brother Pirthi Chand, as the Guru 'kept great state and lived in splendour unknown to his predecessors. He kept fine horses, and was clothed in costly raiments.'¹³

Quite contrary to the Sikh tradition, M'Gregor holds that on the advice of his followers, Guru Arjan himself went to Baba Buddha Ji to

11. John Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, London 1812, pp. 30-33.

12. Sikh tradition holds Chandu Shah responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Sahib as he wanted to settle his old scores with the Guru who had refused the hand of Chandu's daughter for his only son (Guru) Hargobind.

13. W.L. M'Gregor, *The History of the Sikhs*, Language Department Punjab, Patiala 1970, (first edition 1846, 2 Vols.), Vol. I., pp. 53-54.

be blessed with a son.¹⁴ However, he consider the enmity of Chandu the sole cause of the martyrdom of the Guru. According to him Chandu Shah was Prime Minister at Lahore and there was enmity between him and the Guru for the latter had refused Chandu's proposal to have his daughter wed to his only son Hargobind.¹⁵ He argues that, 'Chandooshah had a beautiful daughter, whom his father wished to bestow in marriage on his succession in office; this resolution he communicated to his friends, but they advised him to give her in marriage to Urjun's son, as he was a very comely youth. Chandooshah spurned the advice and added 'Though Urjun is a wealthy man and a Hindoo Gooroo, still he is a *fukeer*. I am like the upper story of a house, he is like the drain for receiving the water'.¹⁶ Being pressed, however, Chandu consented to the match and marriage presents were sent to the house of the Guru. M'Gregor continues that 'one of the bystanders related the speech of Chandooshah to the Gooroo, and the comparison he had drawn between them. On hearing this Urjun was very angry and said, "That Hindoo is a fool compared to me, and I will not allow my son to marry his daughter." When the presents were brought, the Gooroo refused his consent to the purposed union, adding, "He is a noble man, I am a *fukeer*; he must be mad in wishing his daughter to wed my son." Chandoo Shah entreated Urjun's forgiveness for the words he had used and went himself to visit the Gooroo, taking with him nearly a lakh of rupees. On coming before Urjun, Chandooshah joined his hands and asked permission to address him, but the latter said it was useless, adding "Oh! Chandooshah my words are engraved on stone and cannot be washed out; I will never gainsay them, and were you to give the whole world as a dowry with your daughter, she shall never wed my son; this is fixed and irrevocable." On hearing these words, Chandooshah remained silent, but from that time meditated revenge against Urjun."¹⁷

However, M'Gregor has erroneously placed this event in the reign of Shah Jahan instead Jahangir. He asserts that when Shah Jahan enroute to Kashmir visited Lahore, Chandu having obtained audience

14. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.

15. *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

16. *Op.cit.*

17. *Ibid.*, p. 56.

related to the Emperor that "a Hindoo *fukeer* had sprung up in the Punjab who assumed a state of royalty and had crowds of people as his followers, who raised tumult and disturbances." Upon this a horseman was sent to fetch him. On seeing the Guru the emperor exclaimed, "He has a *fukeer's* face; I will befriend him" and dismissed him. But Chandu was determined to get the Guru murdered. Addressing the Guru, he said, "I will again bring you before the Emperor tomorrow, when you must either defend your own cause, or be punished." On hearing these words, 'Urjun knew well that he would not escape with his life' and the next morning he requested leave to go to the *ravee* for the purpose of bathing, promising, that he would afterwards return and do whatever was required of him. His request was granted. On reaching the river, the Gooroo plunged into it, sank and disappeared." However, his corpse was recovered and cremated by the Sikhs. A temple, elegantly built, with a dome covered with gold, stands within the city of Lahore in memory of this event, which took place in 1607.¹⁸

Clearly M'Gregor attributes the martyrdom of Guru Sahib to the enmity of Chandu Shah and does not mention about the role of the Mughal Emperor in this event of great significance in Sikh history. Curiously enough, he does not mention about the torture inflicted on the Guru, but gives a new story about the mode of Guru's death which suggests that the Guru sought his own demise not to defend his claims but escape any kind of punishment given to him. This sort of explanation is quite contrary to both, the Sikh tradition, as well as the personality of the Guru. Therefore, it is inappropriate and misleading.

Enumerating the achievements of Guru Arjan Dev, H.H. Wilson describes: the compilation of the *Adi Granth*, increased wealth and influence which drew upon him the jealousy and persecution of the Mohammedans. He 'was seized and thrown into prison, where he either died or put to death.' However, the act was widely resented by the Sikhs who took up arms under (Guru) Hargobind and 'exactd vengeance from all whom they regarded hostile to their religion'.¹⁹

18. *Ibid.*, p. 57.

19. H.H. Wilson, 'Civil and Religious Institutions of the Sikhs', *The Sikh Religion: A Symposium*, Shushil Gupta, Calcutta 1958 (first published in *Journal of Royal Asiatic Society*, Vol. ix, 1848), p. 57.

Referring to the achievements of Guru Arjan, J.D. Cunningham asserts that during 'the ministry of Arjun, the principles of Nanak took a firm hold on the minds of his followers'. For, he was the first successor of Guru Nanak to clearly understand 'the wide import of his teachings and perceive how applicable they were to every state of life and to every condition of society'. He made Amritsar, 'the proper seat of his followers, the centre which should attract their worldly longing for a material bond of union'. Resultantly, Amritsar became 'a populous city and a great place of pilgrimage of the Sikhs'. To provide fixed rules of religious and moral conduct, to his followers, he compiled the *Adi Granth*. Amongst other, accomplishment of Guru Arjan, Cunningham refers to; the reduction of the customary offerings to a systematic tax, which among other things made the Sikhs accustomed to a regular government of their own, encouragement to extensive trade, particularly in horses.²⁰

Celebrated among pious devotees, Guru Arjan attracted the attention of those in high position. Among them was Chandu Shah, the finance administrator of the Lahore province, who approached the Guru, to betroth his daughter to his son. Prince Khusrau, the son of Jahangir, who was in rebellion and in temporary possession of the Punjab, sought Guru's political partisan. Enraged emperor summoned the Guru, fined and imprisoned at the instigation chiefly of Chandu Shah. He died in 1606, a death hastened by the rigours of his confinement.²¹

Ernest Trumpp looks upon Guru Arjan as 'an enterprising and active man' who had 'a great talent for organization'. His main object was to provide to his followers an authenticated sacred text 'in order to unite them more closely by one common religious tie and to separate them from the mass of the Hindus'. This was, according to Trumpp, the objective behind the compilation of *Adi Granth*, to which he describes as the '*Bible* of the Sikhs' and which gradually supplanted 'the authority of the *Vedas* and *Puranas*, which the unlettered people had never been able to read, whereas the *Granth* was composed in their mother-tongue and intelligible to the vulgar.' To equip the Sikh

20. J.D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, Low Price Publications, Delhi 1990 (first - 1849 London), pp. 46-47 & 48.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Community with an organization and to ensure regular financing for his aspiring schemes, the Guru reduced 'the voluntary offerings of his disciples to a kind of tax, which he levied by deputies, whom he nominated in the several districts and who forwarded, whatever they had collected annually to the Guru'. Another measure which he adopted to have more funds was to deal extensively in horse trade. Regular flow of considerable sums enabled the Guru to keep 'an establishment like a grandee; to hold a court and to keep always a strong band of adherents around his body and extend his authority' in the far flung areas. Gradually, the Sikhs became 'accustomed to a kind of government of their own, and began to feel themselves as a firmly organised and strong party within the state'. Due to his organizational measures, the Sikh 'community increased very considerably and spread fast over the Punjab; but in proportion as the Sikhs began to draw public attention on themselves, the suspicion of the Mohammedan Government was roused, and Guru Arjan was the first who fell a victim to it.²²

About the reason and mode of death of Guru Arjan, Trumpp repeats the same story as found in M'Gregor's account, but does not consider the enmity of Chandu as the only cause of the martyrdom of the Guru. However, relying on the account of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, he asserts that Guru Arjan Dev was 'arraigned on the charge that he had joined (with his adherents) in the rebellion of Khusrau. Whichever way he died, his death was ascribed to the bigotry and cruelty of the Mohammedan Government, and his disciples were burning to revenge it. The death of Guru Arjan is therefore the great turning-point in the development of the Sikh Community, as from that time the struggle commenced, which changed the whole character of this reformatory movement.'²³

In retrospect, an analysis of these writings reveals to the reader that none of these scholars have used the word 'martyrdom'; they have used the word 'death' either by 'torture' or 'murder'. But this does not mean that they did not look upon it as an event of great historical significance in Sikh history. Also, Cunningham and Trumpp's assertion that Guru Arjan reduced the voluntary offerings of his disciples to a

22. Ernest Trumpp, *The Adi Granth*, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi, 1997, pp. lxxx-ii.

23. *Ibid.*, p. lxxxii.

systematic tax, is wrong. For, the Sikhs paid a part of their income (usually known as *Daswand*, 1/10 part of one's income), out of reverence for the Guru and not under any kind of compulsion. However, Guru Arjan was a favourite son of his father, Guru Ram Das. He was an energetic and enterprising leader having great organizational skill. His measures to spread the Sikh faith; instituting and consolidating new institutions; completion of *Amrit sarovar*, construction of Harmandir, compilation of *Adi Granth*, to organize masand system, establishment of new townships, instituting daily worship at Harmandir Sahib etc; resulted in the proliferation and consolidation of the Sikh *Panth*. Increased following followed by considerable wealth and influence, rendered his position not only amongst the Sikhs, but also amongst the non-Sikhs, analogous to the 'Pope'. He came to be looked upon as *Sacha Padshah* (true king); in other words, he was being regarded more than a spiritual guide. This position of the Guru in the Sikh as well non-Sikh world was not cherished by the Emperor Jahangir himself as well as by the orthodox Muslims. For this the Guru had to pay the price with his head. His martyrdom for the Sikh faith, inflamed the religious passions of the peaceful Sikh *Panth*, converting it into a warlike nation, ready to defend their faith with the sword. Thus his martyrdom proved to be a turning point in Sikh history which changed the whole character of the Sikh movement.

PORTENT OF SOCIAL SYSTEM: BANI OF GURU ARJAN DEV

Dr Navtej Singh *

Personality of Guru Arjan Dev remains unique in the historical space both in terms of his contributions and martyrdom. Compilation of the *Adi Granth* was not merely the collection and editing of the *Bani* of previous Gurus but by adding his own compositions, the Guru presented for posterity new and different way of living and thinking alongwith fixation of man's relationship with God.¹

The configurations of Guru Arjan Dev comprise Sri Raga, Raga Majh, Bara Mah, Raga Gauri, Sukhmani, Raga Asa, Raga Gujri, Raga Devgandhari, Raga Wadhans, Raga Sorth, Raga Dhanasri, Raga Jaitsri, Raga Todi, Raga Bairodi, Raga Suhi, Raga Bilawal, Raga Gaund, Raga Ramkali, Raga Maru, Raga Tukhari, Raga Kedara, Raga Bhairav, Raga Besant, Raga Sarang, Raga Malhar, Raga Kanada and *Slokas*.² Apart from reflecting objectives of human living, behaviour and spiritual aspects of man's existence vis-a-vis the supremacy of God; his compositions also indicate social system and structure of society. The paper tends to focus on these images or impressions which are immanent directly or indirectly.

Issues related to the social organization emerging from his writings include the concept of family, poverty and richness, agrarian and pastoral economy, nature of routine living, ultimate belief in the purpose of life, social and caste stratifications, literacy, rituals and customs, concept of power, trading activities, relationship between man and woman, both in terms of the institution of marriage and prostitution, significance of topography and geography, means of

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1. Hans, S.S., *Reconstruction of Sikh History From Sikh Literature*, ABS Publications, Jalandhar, 1998, pp.137-77.

2. Duggal, K.S., *Select Sikh Scriptures-II*, UBSPD, New Delhi, 1998.

communications, animals and birds, specific basic human instinct and traits, and the level of information and education both of the past and contemporary environments.

To begin with, concept of family assumes core issue of social relationships which is considered as the foundation of human existence. The family is tied with husband, wife, sons, brothers and friends.³ Guests visit houses but stay for short periods.⁴ People are involved in routine affairs of family.⁵ They are engaged equally in pursuit of wealth.⁶ Traits of a happy family include conjugal bliss, joyous melodies, dance and drama, and adoration of wife by her spouse. Wife is considered lucky and virtuous if loved by her husband. Good wife wins heart of husband and a wife should have many brothers.⁷

Marriage is considered as essential and without wife house is felt as deserted.⁸ Respect for husband is expected from wife.⁹ But there is mention of women who involve themselves with someone else, other than their husbands.¹⁰ There are people who enjoy company of many women.¹¹ Tendency is found among some men who despite having every type of charming wives, still they look at other's doors.¹² In general people keep eye on other's wives.¹³ Infinite charm, high caste, shrewed, learned and wealthiness are the traits of privileged women.¹⁴

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3. Absorbed in the spectacle of sons
and fancy arrays of your spouse,
you enjoy and feel happy
leading a colourful life.

Sri Raga V, Score I, in Duggal, op. cit., p.36.

4. Like the overnight guest,
you have to depart early in the morning.

Ibid. (1), p.40.

5. Involved in the family affairs
which are only like a flower bed.

Ibid. (2), p.40.

6. *Ibid. (3).*

7. She is highly cultured, pre-eminent,
richly equipped with learning,
of noble lineage and several brothers.

Majh V(3), p.55.

8. A house without the spouse
Is like a deserted village, an accursed town.

Bara Mah, Majh V, p.60.

9. She who serves the spouse at her parents'
She lives happily at the in-laws.

Sri Raga, V (3), p.41

10. She who is misled by doubts in Bhadon,
And is involved with someone else.

Ibid.

11. And enjoys the company of many women.

Raga Gauri (2), p. 70.

12. He has charming wives of every type,
yet he haunts the neighbour's door.

Gauri V (2), p.87.

13. *Sukhmani, Octavo (5), p. 114.*

14. Charm infinite, high caste, shrewed, learned and wealthy.

Slok (253), p.94.

Sins are committed in society.¹⁵ Jealousy among relatives is common.¹⁶ Sleeping with other's wife was not unknown.¹⁷ Existence of strong institution of prostitution.¹⁸ It is recognised that in the absence of spouse, wife is a disaster.¹⁹

Wealth is only the possession of rich.²⁰ It is also considered blessings of the God.²¹ There are feeble persons in society afflicted with destitution and hunger.²² On the contrary there is category of people with big estates and owners of gardens.²³ Upper class people dress levishly and munch betel.²⁴ Rich people also possess lofty mansions.²⁵ They also keep armies of elephants and steeds.²⁶ Practice of giving gold, horses and land in charity is prevalent.²⁷

Degree of richness is measured by extent of possession of chariots, elephants, horses and robes.²⁸ A sizeable number of people have taken refuge at places of pilgrimages.²⁹ Size of labour class is

15. Sins are committed in the society.

Remembering the Name kills countless sins.

Sukhmani, Octavo (3), p. 102.

16. My spouse has parted me from my mother-in-law

Of jealousy are dead sister-in-law and brother-in-law.

Raga Asa, V(1), p.188.

17. Behind closed doors and veils

you sleep with another's wife.

Sorath V (3), p. 210.

18. Those who cultivate others,

die suffering like the whores.

Suhi V, Sector 10 (1), p. 230.

19. The wife is bounded for life,

without the spouse, she is an utter disaster.

Raga Malhar V(1) p. 289.

20. Lost in apparel, gold and silver

varieties of horses and elephants

and untiring chariots.

Sri Raga V, score I, p. 36.

21. If the True Guru is gracious,

One enjoys a million pleasures and kingly powers.

Sri Raga V (2), p. 37.

22. He who is feeble, afflicted with destitution and hunger,

Not a pice in his pocket, sans any solace.

Sri Raga, V (2), p. 42.

23. He who wields power, owns estate,

He who has attractive gardens.

Sri Raga V(6), p.43.

24. What use is dressing up lavishly,

Munching betel and comely figure?

Bara Mah, Majh V, p. 60.

25. *Ibid.*, p. 68.

26. With lofty mansions of alluring appearance.

Content at the sight of elephants and steeds.

Raga Gauri (2), p.70 .

27. Give in charity your gold,

fine bred horses and land.

Sukhmani, Octavo (2), p.105.

28. Myth is chariots, elephants, horses and robes.

Canto V, Octavo (4), p.113.

29. Millions who have taken abode at the places of pilgrimage.

Canto X, Octavo (1) (2), p. 132.

much larger and they work very hard.³⁰ Beggars are part of society.³¹

Existence of strong caste-system and the status of Brahmin is the highest.³² People in general live in worries and the resultant maladies.³³ Anxiety and sorrows also result in physical illness and deformity.³⁴ Salvation is the ultimate social issue for majority of population.³⁵ *Yama* is feared by all.³⁶ People have knowledge about Hindu mythological heroes and gods like Brahma, Shiva, and Indra.³⁷ They believe in theory of reincarnation.³⁸ Stories of Mahabharata and Ramayana are known to the people along with some other medieval saints like Dhanna and Prahlad.³⁹ A good number of people have rejected the world and are wandering in jungles in search of God.⁴⁰ Worship at religious places is common.⁴¹

The seers, celibates, yogis, feudal chiefs with luxuries, mystics, scholars, vaishnavs, ascetics, slogan-mongers, naked people, over-clad people and entertainers are the other visible social categories of human beings.⁴²

Among various practices and beliefs include reading of *Vedas*, *Shastras*, *Smritis* and pilgrimage, taking bath, *Sati*, eighty-four lakh births of man, keeping of fasts and sacredness of sixty-eight places of pilgrimages. People also have knowledge that gems and jewels are extracted from the bed of ocean and the existence of gold mines.⁴³

30. Millions who tire themselves working.

Ibid. (5), p.134.

31. While at others he is a beggar of little means.

Ibid., p.138.

32. They are heroes of high caste, who adore the Deity.
The Kshatrias, Brahmins, Vaishyas, Shudras
and even the Chandalas.

Pauri, p. 186.

33. He who has worries galore, suffers many a malady.

Sri Raga V (3), p. 42.

34. *Ibid.*

35. He is benevolent reliever of pain,
In whose company one salvation gains.

Canto XVI, Octavo (8), p.156.

36. Sorrows, pain and Yama would never haunt.

Gauri V (4), p. 80.

37. May be there are Brahma, Shiva, Sages and Indra.

Devghandhari V (1), p. 202.

38. Millions who reincarnate again and again.

Canto V (5), p. 134.

39. God Himself vindicated Prahlad,
And robe he sent to Draupadi when His help she sought.

Basant V, Sector I (4), p. 284.

40. Millions who have withdrawn from the world;
Millions are in quest of God.

Canto X (6), p. 134.

41. Millions of worshippers; Millions who perform their duty.

Ibid., Octavo (1) (2), p. 133.

42. You may practise penance like the Yogis and go on pilgrimage.

Sri Raga V(4), p. 43; (5) (6), p.45.

43. *Canto X* (4), p. 133.

Known basic instincts include lust, wrath, attachment, strife, anger, falsehood, greed and fraud.⁴⁴ While good looks, wit and strength are the virtues to be expected.⁴⁵ Concept of authority, youth, wealth and prosperity are recognised.⁴⁶ Existence of *Lashkar* is equated with the symbol of political power.⁴⁷ Wrestling is another social activity.⁴⁸

People have knowledge of different seasons and months and also the particular activities associated with them.⁴⁹ Varieties of birds and animals are known to the society.⁵⁰ People are also aware of different planets.⁵¹

Agriculture and pastoral economy exist simultaneously.⁵² Drought is bad for crops.⁵³ Mercantile activities quite active.⁵⁴ Boat or ferry is used to cross the rivers.⁵⁵ Lastly, moneylender-cum-trader is essential part of the economic system.⁵⁶

Thus the social organization depicted in the *Bani* of Guru Arjan Dev hints at horizontal and vertical divisions among society. Apart from religious and caste differentiation every individual appears to be under pressure of a variety of forces. Manifestation of this could have been in the accumulation of restlessness and violence alongwith the tendency to escape facing this challenge.

By identifying this social situation, the stress given in the *Bani* of previous Gurus and Guru Arjan Dev himself provide an alternate to

44. He who is addicted to lust, wealth and attachment,
a miser given to greed.

Sri Raga V (4), p. 43.

45. I have neither looks, nor wits, nor strength.

Gauri Purbi V (1), p. 84.

46. Myth is authority, youth, wealth and prosperity.

Canto V, Octavo (4), p.113.

47. *Sri Raga V* (7), p. 44.

48. I am my Master's Champion Wrestler.

Sri Raga V (17), p.46.

49. *Bara Mah, Majh V* (7), p. 64.

50. For many a birth you were worm and insect,
For many a birth elephant, fish and deer.
For many a birth you were bird and serpent.
For many a birth yoked as horse and bullock.

Raga Gauri, Gauri Guareri V (1), p. 71.

51. You may live long and move about the nine continents of the earth.

Sukhmani, Octavo (2), p. 105.

52. The cowherd have come to the pasture, why beat the drum?

Sri Raga V, score 2 (1), p. 39.

53. Without water the crop withers and fetches no price.

Bara Mah, Majh V, p.60.

54. In the first quarter of the night, my merchant friend!

Sri Raga V (1) (5), p. 49.

55. Nanak who sought His support is ferried across.

Bara Mah, Majh V, (13), p.68.

56. Amongst moneylenders, you are a true money-lender,
And among traders, you are trader.

Raga Gujri, Gujri V, Score 2(4), p.198.

confront this malady in order to have satisfactory, meaningful and stress-free living. Furthermore, in the absence of political initiative on part of contemporary political power and its inability to address the issue of societal evolution, efforts on the part of the Sikh Gurus certainly constitute people's response and hence the change from below. In this sense transformation of medieval society begins by this new emerging understanding. Obviously, it was bound to provide a potential base for a future challenge to the state. It made beginning of the conflict between this element of change and the authority in power.

GURU ARJAN DEV: A PERSONALITY PROFILE

*Dr Shiv Gajrani**

Guru Arjan Dev blessed us with the boon of divine intoxication in agony and demise. He transformed the sufferings as well as death into holy worship, a welcome rare divine blessing. Guru Arjan opened and lighted up the holy path, the Divine Sikh way on which every true Sikh walks from the very day he gets baptised. All the Great Divine accomplishments of Guru Arjan Dev shine at the pinnacle of all Spiritual Glory. These shine in the Majesty of the characteristic and unmatched humility of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikh religion.

Guru Arjan Dev is called a martyr because he went through untold bodily sufferings for the noble cause of freedom of faith and worship; because he condemned the ruler of the day as well as the wealthy for their tyranny over the people; secondly, because he aroused in people's hearts a sense of dignity and self-respect; and thirdly, because he refused to give up his faith and embrace Islam. Because of all that, he was ordered to be put to death by torture. According to Sikh tenets, a true martyr was one, who, imbued with the love of God (*Simran*) and service of mankind (*Seva*) offered himself for supreme sacrifice for the cause of upholding truth and defending *Dharma* (righteousness). He did it, at all costs and in the face of challenges from any side, in order to defend, thereby, the right against wrong, justice against injustice, and for serving and safeguarding any other and allied noble cause. While treading the path of martyrdom, he shunned all pressures and inducements, tolerated all tortures and torments, and expected no material gain or victory for himself, his country or community. Guru Arjan Dev, attained martyrdom in accordance with this philosophy and

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perfect peace of spirit and abiding in His sweet words. Guru ji inspired his followers with this unique act and corrected them to serve the humanity.

The martyrdom was the direct outcome of the Jahangir's apprehension about the spread of different creeds that might create trouble for him. Although Guru Arjan Dev had never thought of politics, yet Sikhism was developing in a way so as to create suspicion in the mind of Jahangir. I.B. Banerjee also mentions this fact in *Evolution of the Khalsa*. He writes :

“The question may very well be raised as to whether the reforms carried out by Guru Arjan and his predecessors could directly be ascribed to political motive but whatever the original intention might have been, it cannot be denied that these reforms considerably prepared the way for the political development that the Sikhs achieved under Guru Arjan's successors - the well-knit organization of the *Sangats* and the *Masands* not only kept the Sikhs together and in touch with their leader, but also provided them with funds necessary for common purposes and familiarised them with a kind of self-government, however, imperfect it might have been.”¹

This growing power of Sikhism was also taken note of by the Muslim and the Hindu orthodox sections of the Punjab². Shaikh Ahmad, in particular, was against the rise of Sikhism and he felt quite happy over the execution of Guru Arjan Dev.³ But, this cannot be said that Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi had influenced Jahangir for the execution of Guru Arjan Dev. There is no logic to prove that he did. Jahangir had no soft corner for Shaikh Ahmad till 1620.⁴ Guru Arjan was executed in 1606. So, there was no question of his having exercised any influence on Jahangir. At the most he might have had developed a link with Murtza Khan and goaded him to misrepresent Guru Arjan's case and hastened execution when Guru Arjan was handed over to him.

Jahangir regarded Jadrup's existence as a great gain to him but hastened to pass unjust orders that Guru Sahib's houses, dwelling places and children be handed over to Murtza Khan, and Guru Arjan be

1. I.B. Banerjee : *Evolution of the Khalsa*, p. 1.

2. *Sikhism*, pp. 12-13.

3. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 13.

4. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 77, 161.

put to death.⁵ There was nothing to substantiate any charge against Guru Arjan. Jahangir did not have a first hand knowledge of Khusrau's meeting with Guru Sahib. Jahangir's own statement - "when this came to my ears and I clearly understood his folly,"⁶ explicitly shows that Jahangir passed the order of punishment on Guru Arjan on the complaint submitted to him by the officials of the Punjab. Here Chandu's machinations and Prithia's intrigues alongwith the working of Murtza Khan prompted Jahangir to go ahead with his plan of putting a stop to the activities of Guru under whose banner Sikhism had gained much in strength and popularity.

By the time of Guru Arjan Dev, the central seat of Sikhism had been established in the heart of *Majha* and a large number of sturdy people of this region got attracted to this religion. The set up of the *Manji* system, the propagation of the religion by the *Masands*, the collection of one tenth of the income of the Sikhs, the horse-trade encouraged by Guru Sahib and Guru Sahib's growing popularity created apprehension in the mind of Jahangir about the growing power of Sikhism. It was this apprehension that obliged Jahangir to record in his memoirs, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, the following:

"In Goindwal, which is on the river Biyah (Beas) there was a Hindu, named Arjan in the garments of sainthood and sanctity, so much so that he had captured many of simple hearted Hindus, and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam, by his ways and manners and they had loudly sounded the drum of his holiness. They called him Guru, and from all sides stupid people crowded to worship and manifest complete faith in him. For three or four generations (of spiritual successors) they had kept this shop warm. Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam."⁷

Jahangir was like-wise apprehensive of the two organized Muslim creeds of Ibrahim Baba and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi Alf Mujaddid Sani. About Shaikh Ibrahim Baba, Jahangir recorded in 1606 :

"News reached me that Shaikh Ibrahim Baba, the Afghan, had opened a religious establishment (*lit. One of being a Shaikh and having*

5. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 49, 52, 104, 105, 108.

6. *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 71.

7. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. I, p. 72.

disciples) in one of the *parganas* of Lahore, and as his doings were disreputable and foolish, a considerable number of Afghans had collected round him. I ordered him to be brought and handed over to Parwiz to be kept in the fort of Chunar, so this vain disturbance was put to an end.”⁸

A striking similarity is noticed in the case of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi about whom Jahangir recorded in 1619 :

“At this time it was reported to me that a Shayyad (a lout talker, a cheat) of the name of Shaikh Ahmad had spread the net of hypocrisy and deceit in Sirhind and caught in it many of the apparent worshippers without spirituality and had sent into every city and country one of his disciples, whom he called his deputy (*Khalifa*), and whom he considered more skilled than other in the adorning of shops (of deceit) and selling of religious knowledge and in deceiving men. He had also written a number of idle tales for his disciples and his believers and had made them into a book which he called “*Maktubat*”. In that album (*Jung*) of absurdities many unprofitable things had been written that drag people into infidelity and impiety... I considered the best thing for him would be that he should remain for some time in prison of correction until the heat of his temperament and confusion of his brain were somewhat quenched and the excitement of the people also should subside. He was accordingly handed over to the Anirai Singh Dolan to be imprisoned in the Gwalior fort.”⁹

Jahangir found one thing common in all the three above mentioned religious men i.e., each one of them had a large following, thus giving apprehension to Jahangir that the spread of their creeds might create some trouble for him.¹⁰ He feared that the well-organized religious creeds, growing independently of the state patronage, might become political. Thus, he did not hide his wrath against the holy men with large followings though he showed great reverence for a Hindu saint, Jadrup Gosain whose association he held as a great privilege and to whom he, so often, ran to enjoy his society and to listen from him “many sublime words of religious duties and knowledge of divine

8. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

9. *Ibid.*, Vol.II, pp. 91-92.

10. Beni Parsad, *History of Jahangir*, p. 377.

things.¹¹ Jahangir tolerated Jadrup and showed respect to him, because he had no fear from the ascetic who according to Jahangir had "a heart free from the attachments of the World."¹²

Regarding the meeting between Khusro and Guru Sahib, the situation was exploited by the intriguing enemies of Guru Sahib. It is of no consequence to raise and discuss this issue here whether Guru Arjan helped the rebel with money and put a *tilak* on his forehead. Probably he did not help Khusro any way, and probably even Jahangir also knew about it. But, the very fact that a prince of the Mughal dynasty was showing respect to the Sikh Guru was sufficient to alert Jahangir regarding the growing prestige of Guru Sahib and he acted promptly under this apprehension that was already simmering in his mind. Thus Guru Arjan Dev had to suffer martyrdom for the growing strength of Sikhism, which could not be tolerated by Jahangir, howsoever peaceful it was.

Guru Arjan Dev accomplished many things during his tenure: completing the excavation of sacred pools at Ramdasapur, creating another sacred pool at Tarn Taran, and designing and constructing *Sri Harimandar Sahib* (Golden Temple) at Amritsar. The greatest / unique work of Guru Arjan Dev is compilation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, which includes many hymns of various Sikh Gurus alongwith many Muslim and Hindu saints. It also includes 2,216 hymns which the fifth Guru wrote himself - the largest contribution to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. The compilation of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* by the great Guru Arjan Dev, would continue to inspire humanity to adopt noble path. Having thus established the banner of Truth, in the midst of reigning falsehood of that 'Dark Age'. Guru Arjan cleared the whole debt by paying the heaviest price, in offering the 'Greatest Sacrifice' of all times as stated above.

No intellectual, scholastic or academic ventures, how-so-ever great, can catch even a glimpse of the true grandeur of Guru Arjan's Divine Majesty. One has to dive deep into the abyss of His humility to catch a glimpse of His true grandeur. And it is from the abyss of this humanity that the House of Guru Nanak shines at the pinnacles of all spiritual glory. Guru Arjan Dev gave himself away and wholly to us.

11. *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Vol. II, pp. 49, 52, 104, 105.

12. *Ibid*.

He gave Himself away unto us. It was not an half-hearted sacrifice. So let us not be half-hearted in our acknowledgement and devotion to our Beloved great Guru.

Guru Arjan Dev, a saint and scholar of rare piety and literary attainments, fourth in succession of Guru Nanak - the founder of Sikh religion, was the first martyr of the Sikh *Panth*. Sikhism, which had been founded to transcend the division between Hindus and Muslims by preaching the teachings of the 'Fatherhood of God' and the 'Brotherhood of man', was exceedingly galling to the bigoted mind of the Mughal Emperor Jahangir who had firmly reasserted and declared the 'Islamic Shariyat' as the foundation of his Government when he ascended the throne. The heroic martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev demonstrated once again the stark fact that religious persecution is sinful, because no one has the right to stand between human soul and God, that violence in this field at least is futile, for religion cannot be inculcated by force that there is no such thing as a belief that is not held voluntarily through a genuine spontaneous inner conviction. He laid down his life for a principle and his example generated a new impulse for calm suffering and sacrifice.

Guru Arjan Dev upheld the belief that every religion is true if only its adherents sincerely and honestly follow it, that truth is not the monopoly of any one religion or person of any one caste. *Guru Granth*, the Sikh scripture written in the spoken language of the people to whom the masters delivered their message of devotion to God and service to humanity, includes impartially hymns written by Hindus and Muslims along with the writings of the Sikh Gurus and the social out castes.

As stated above Guru Arjan Dev gave the Sikhs a central place of worship. Amritsar became the fountainhead of the spiritual and social activities of the nascent commonwealth. Guru Arjan Dev inherited us a unique Universal Temple of God which represents true humility of Guru Nanak Dev and the inborn unity and equality of the whole mankind. A temple where the glory of ond God, *Allah* and *Khuda*, *Hari* and *Narayan* is sung from the same platform in divine melodies of true lovers of God, irrespective of their religion, colour, caste, creed and status. The doors of *Sri Harimandar Sahib* were thrown open to the seekers of truth irrespective of the sex and status or caste and creed.

A sympathetic study of oriental faiths and their religious heritages is, therefore, considered imperative for cementing the bonds of friendship and understanding in this strife-torn world of today. The 'One World' in which we live with its close communications makes nonsense of religious isolation. The need of the moment is not one religion but mutual respect and tolerance of the devotees of different reunions.

Amrit Bani of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is fully charged with the *Nam Khumari* of Guru Nanak, life essence of the prophets of love, total human, religious and linguistic harmony and integration. Last but not the least, we have inherited the supreme bliss of Martyrdom from our beloved great Guru Arjan Dev. He taught the followers of Guru Nanak how to love and embrace death in tune with the Divine.

Guru Arjan Dev is the Lord of Blessings. He is the manifest Lord, Lord incarnate. He has blessed us with rare gift of beholding Guru Nanak, face to face, in the Eternal Guru, *Adi Granth / Sri Guru Granth Sahib* of serving the Guru in person, of basking in the perpetual sunshine of Guru's holy presence and of drinking the immortal Nectar of His *Amrit Bani* to our heart's content.

In the Sikh *Panth*, Guru Arjan Dev was himself the first to enter into the arena of this cosmic sacrifice. He sat in a blissful meditation and ecstatic equipoise on the hot iron plate while burning sand was poured on his holy head in an unending stream. With no feeling of ill-will, with no word of rancor and condemnation and with a soul-stirring glow of the sweet will of the Lord, writ large on his holy face, he blissfully underwent all brutal tortures, agony and suffering. But immensity, depth and unlimited magnitude of Guru Arjan's grace, compassion, mercy and sacrifice is yet to be befittingly acknowledged by ungrateful, materialistic and selfish human nature.

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, was offered Guruship on 1st of September 1581 C.E., after a series of tests in which he proved his worth for being honest, sincere and a sense of deep devotion for the tenets of the newly emerging Sikh religion. Guru Arjan Dev remained woefully busy during his whole tenure of Guruship. His efforts for the compilation of *Sri Adi Granth*, raising of new towns, digging of wells and tanks and welfare centres for the Sikhs and destitutes added into the Sikh fold a large number of the Hindus including some of the Muslims.

His Holiness Sri Guru Arjan Dev who ascended to the fifth spiritual throne of Guru Nanak was subjected to inhuman torture at the hands of the tyrannical Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Despite the untold sufferings, he kept uttering “ਤੇਰਾ ਕੀਆ ਮੀਠਾ ਲਾਗੈ, ਹਰਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਪਦਾਰਥ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਮਾਂਗੈ।” The supreme sacrifice made by him will be remembered by generations to come and till the world lasts. Besides laying the foundation of the historical Golden Temple, Amritsar, the fifth Guru Sri Guru Arjan Dev has the honour to complete the unfinished work of excavation of holy *Sarovars*, Santokh Sar of Amritsar and foundation of Tarn Taran township. Sri Guru Arjan Dev spread the message of universal brotherhood, love and oneness irrespective of caste, creed or religion.

The immense growth of Sikhism embittered the *Brahmins* and the Muslim priestly classes. Therefore, many complaints were lodged with the Mughal Emperor Akbar against the Guru under one pretension or the other by these priestly classes. But Akbar followed a liberal policy and during his lifetime neither the Muslims nor the Hindus could cause much harm to the Sikh faith. Towards the end of Akbar's era of liberalism, the Sikh community was heading towards an *emporium in imperio* i.e. a separate identity within the empire, an eyesore for the orthodoxism and radicalism led the cause of Guru Arjan's Martyrdom and he became a first martyr in the civilized history of the world, after a gap of centuries.

It was Guru Arjan Dev's great vision that he took to difficult task to compile *Sri Adi Granth*, the Sikh scripture. The term scripture refers to holy written text, which is the most revered among the faith-followers (devotees) for whom the text is divine book of divine origin. The Sikh scripture, known as *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* got transcendental status, eternal living Guru for the whole Sikh community.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred text of the Sikhs contains spiritual, philosophical, metaphysical, symbolic as well as practical system of religious expression and also socio-political structure of medieval India. Guru Arjan's idea was to present to the world a scripture “which should serve as a text book of universe religion, and something which is essential and common to the truly religious side of faith.” Guru Arjan Dev selected the subject material of this holy text in such a way that its teachings should guide the devotees for spiritual

peace at all times and in all countries. *Sri Adi Granth* is a collection of devotional hymns of the Saints of different faiths which is unique, not found in the universal holy books of the other religions. This proves Guru Arjan's vision and wisdom for national integration, which of course is truly reflected in *Sri Adi Granth*.

Guru Arjan Dev constantly hammered against the *Sati*, i.e. burning of woman on the funeral pyre of her husband. He vehemently denounced this inhuman act. He worked for the emancipation of women, a most important task needed in India of the medieval age. The social welfare activities such as to restore the dignity or honour of the women, to support the patients afflicted with leprosy and also to provide financial help to some of the devotees who were interested for trade. The universal appeal for humanism was the theme of Guru Arjan for his welfare projects for the human beings.

The idea of universal brotherhood based on love and sympathy is promoted by Guru Arjan. The Sikh Guru's composition, as reflected from the scripture, was not in favour of "war and violence", "death and destruction", "terror and killings" and injustice with the innocent people. Guru Arjan Dev propagated the universal message for peace and tranquility. His ideas of common brotherhood and religious universalism seem to be befitted need in the global ethnic problems, if religious boundaries are drawn parallel to understand the truth about war and violence then surely and certainly the path shown by Guru Arjan will be highly valuable and fruitful to stop violence and to maintain peace and harmony at the global level.

Guru Arjan found the Sikhs free of caste prejudice and devoted to their Guru, but a mere religious sect; he left them a nation, and entrusted them to a successor with orders to maintain an army but in all other respects to follow the earlier Gurus. He was a great statesman, a peaceful organizer, philosopher and poet. His unfailing gentleness and loving self-restraint before his spiteful elder brother would alone have shown him a true saint; his poems, a spontaneous inspired outflow are so musical.

Guru is unusually easy in his diction and never obscure; there is much repetition, but every line seems new and fresh. It is so instinct with the simplicity of creation. His themes are ever love, devotion and union with the Beloved after the long agony of separation; his *Bara*

Maha and his *Sukhmani* rank among the best of these and perhaps recall the misery of the three lonely years in Lahore before his father called him home.

His poems are the most extensive among the immortal poets whose work is enshrined in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. To hear them from his own lips that thrilled with yearning passion, playing on the melody of the tambur's soft notes as he sang to the pilgrims in the *Hari Mandir* at Amritsar, must have been an experience to drive the hearer into all sanctifying love. His very presence was spiritual attraction, and none could be unmoved by it save the few who were inspired by evil's very self, as it were. His toleration of personal wrongs, his humility and patience have won him love among the people on earth.